The Representation and Consumption of 'Asian Culture'

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IMAGES ON PAGES 160, 166, 171 AND 175

Abstract

This thesis focuses on the representation and consumption of 'Asian culture' within a context of Western popular culture and specifically, 'British mainstream' and 'British Asian' magazine visual discourses. Through a critical engagement with Edward Said's Orientalism (1978) which charted Western inferiorizing cultural representations of the East as located in historical and material contexts, I aim to explore issues of 'race' and Otherness amidst a background of historical and commodification processes. This has been attempted using multiple methodologies that in addition to engaging with secondary material, has involved a reflexive use of semiotics and discourse analysis to analyse magazine images and written text respectively. Further, I have attempted to go beyond the textual focus of both Orientalism (1978) and many media studies by also gathering contextual reader responses to magazine representations. These have taken the form of the subjective interpretations of 20 British youths (men and women of Asian and white English origin) that have been analysed in conjunction with biographical narratives that I also conducted with each of them.

Through the use of this rich and varied empirical data coupled with a thorough review of secondary source material, I aim to add to and question work that has been conducted in the area of 'race' and culture that appears to have moved from a concentration on the 'essential black subject' to an emphasis on ethnic unities within an uncritical celebration of 'diaspora' and 'hybridity'. I also aim to make problematic work that has been conducted in the area of orientalism through drawing attention to the limitations associated with the concept of 'self-orientalism' and practices of 'self-representation' by minorities. Overall, through conducting work on Asian representations within the popular magazine media coupled with its interrelation with varied audiences, I hope to make some inroads into these under-researched areas.

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Preface

"For some reason, the white middle classes
are eating up Asian culture like fish and chips"

(BBC producer, Carlton Dixon quoted in Kinnes, 2003: 24)

The millennium has brought with it a proliferation of all things 'Asian' in various realms of popular culture, from fashion and beauty to health and lifestyle to film, music and food. Entwined within this 'cultural promotion' are many public endorsements that to be Asian in the West in general and Britain in particular is, at the level of popular culture at least, something to be celebrated. The examples provided below illustrate this point, as follows:

In 2001(23 October) the Indian film *'Asoka'* gained a rare Leicester Square Premier and subsequently the film's main actor, *Shah Rukh Khan* appeared on various 'mainstream' mediums. These included Channel five's *Movie Chart Show* (24 October 2001) and an interview with British institution, *Richard and Judy* to features in magazines such as *Elle* (January issue 2002) where Khan was hailed as the Indian Tom Cruise. It is of interest that a man who has temples named after him throughout India is inevitably given the Western success barometer, reflecting perhaps a means of familiarizing 'the strange' (as the Hollywood mimicking, 'Bollywood' label bestowed on Indian commercial cinema is intended to do). To continue with Indian film, *Lagaan* earned an Oscar nomination in 2002 for best foreign film and in the same year *Devdas* was premiered at Cannes. Subsequently, one of it's female stars, *Ashwairya Rai*, joined the judging panel at the 2003 Cannes festival, before becoming immortalized at London's *Madame Tussauds* (October 2004). This also served to launch the centre's 'Bollywood for Beginners' where members of the public can book for a master class in 'Bollywood' acting and dancing.

In addition, *Vanity Fair* magazine included a supplement profiling Indian film actors (May 2002) and arguably the highest ranked 'Bollywood' actor, *Amitabh Buchan*, was attributed a film festival at the *Lincoln Centre* in New York (April 2005) where several of his films were screened.

Closer to 'home', British Asian self-representations that hinged on stereotypes of the 'overbearing Asian family' basked in glory. For instance, *Bend it like Beckham*, a film by Indian director Gurinder Chadha, won a Bafta (February 2002) and subsequently came Chadha's internationally marketed film, *Bride and Prejudice* (2004) a 'Bollywood style' reworking of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice.* In addition, the BBC 2 comedy, *Kumars at No.42,* won an award at the British Comedy Awards (December 2002). The comedy involves *Sanjeev Baskhar* interviewing predominantly white celebrities, amidst interruptions from his stereotypical extended Asian family. The programme's mainstream success is reflected in the move to primetime Saturday night viewing on BBC1 in 2005. Overall, the BBC has set its sights on 'Asian' by introducing in 2003, an Asian family in *EastEnders* ('the Ferreiras') after ten years. The project started out as going against familiar images of the 'Asian family' by virtue of, for example, 'separated parents' and an 'eccentric Elvis impersonating Father'. However, their representation descended into stereotypical farce followed by invisibility culminating in the family's exit two years later.

Moving further a field from this mainstream arena and fresh from her integral role in comedies such as *Goodness Gracious Me* and the production of Andrew Lloyd Weber's, *Bombay Dreams* (2002) there was Meera Sayal's three part, *Life isn't all ha ha hee hee* shown on prime-time BBC1 (May 2005).The comedy drama following the lives of three Asian female friends, while relying on familiar Asian stereotypes of 'the family' and 'Asian women' had and was promoted as having enough human substance and experience to extend identifications beyond culture and ethnicity. However, debates emanating from the programme such as that which ensued on the daily topical discussion programme, *The Wright*

Stuff on Channel 5 (25 May 2005) used the drama to instigate a familiar essentialist discussion of 'culture clash' within immigrant families.

Meanwhile, Channel 4 has offered and continues to offer its own portrayal of 'Asian' through a combination of entertainment and documentary. For instance, there has been the India versus England cricket tests throughout the summer of 2002, which heralded 'their Indian summer' and led to showings of Indian films (although scheduled far from prime time viewing). This was followed, in a post September 11 context, by a series of programmes on Muslims in Britain (2002) and The Great British Asian Invasion (2004) that aimed to highlight the diversity within South Asian groups. Further, during pre-election (2005) where immigration issues were salient, a series of programmes were broadcast that in dealing with immigration inevitably highlighted black and Asian experiences.

On a lighter note, the nation's obsession with 'Bollywood' and reality TV respectively were brought together in the channel's showcasing of *Bollywood Star* (2004) that charted the journey of members of the public in Britain (across age and ethnicity, including white English) in their quest for Mumbai stardom. However the predominantly Asian orientation of the show ensured that questions from Channel 4 interviewers to the Asian female contestants' parents consisted of, for example, 'what if she had a white boyfriend?' or 'had to kiss on screen?' Although such questions have little relevance to the aim of the show it has significant resonances in the familiarized perceptions of Asians.

In the realm of music, Panjabi MC's upbeat bhangra track, *Mundian Tohn Bach Ke* reached the top ten of the UK charts (2003) and is included in urban and more curiously, spiritual music compilations (e.g. Karma Collection's 'spiritual chill out vibes' of 2003). The image of anything Asian or Eastern as by design 'spiritual and mystical' is consistently reproduced.

Finally, the pinnacle of the 'Asian Invasion' can be seen in the 'Bollywood' extravaganza that was hosted by department stores such as Selfridges in 2002, where Indian or homogenised Asian was on sale for people to buy and buy into in various ways. Here there were personal appearances by Indian film stars; film posters and cds on sale; beauty counters serving up Bombay dreams in a compact by offering to transform shoppers into 'Bollywood goddesses'. While Selfridges has since moved on to consume the exotica of Brazil (2004) and the glamour of Las Vegas (2005) handbags with random 'Bollywood' film stills covering them can be found intermingled with 'ethnic' jewellery. The Selfridges event epitomizes postmodernist claims of the symbolic assuming primary importance in modern capitalist society, where the 'image' is paramount. Baudrillard's (1998) 'I shop therefore I am' (a slogan that ironically is used consistently during Selfridges sales promotions) may be translated to: 'buy exotica therefore become exotic'.

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This thesis concerns itself with the proliferation of 'Asian culture' and in particular with the manner in which it comes to be represented and consumed through visual images of popular culture, as I shall now explain in more detail in the introduction.

Introduction & Context

The ubiquitous nature of 'Asian culture' may at first sight appear to be far removed from the derogatory stereotypes that have pervaded the representations of Asians in the West for years and certainly in terms of 'being visible' in popular culture, this constitutes a phenomenon of sorts. While 'the West' in general is referred to at various points in this thesis, the primary context for this study is Britain, which is widely acknowledged as being a good home for multi culture. However, at the time of completing this thesis, the terrible bombings in the Capital (July 2005) by 'home grown' black and Asian Muslim youths have catapulted the reality of British multiculturalism into the spotlight. In this climate, a study about the representations of 'race' and culture coupled with youth identity positionings becomes particularly pertinent.

Research Focus

This thesis is concerned with the broad issues of 'race', culture and Otherness. These are explored through the representation of 'Asian culture and identity' (or what may be called 'Asianness') in popular culture, with a specific focus on the visual discourses of 'British mainstream' and 'British Asian' magazines (contextual discussion of visual discourse/magazines is provided later in this introductory discussion). The significance of representation, through media discourses, has been highlighted as central to the ways in which meaning is constructed or 're-presented' as opposed to just reflected (Hall,1997).

Although highly significant work has been conducted on issues of 'race' within popular culture/the media (e.g. Gabriel, 1998; Hall, 1997; Solomos and Back, 1996) there has been very little research specifically conducted on issues of South Asian representation in and with relation to elements of British popular culture. Further, research that has been conducted has largely concentrated on 'music' (e.g. Sharma et al, 1996) or the broadcast media (e.g. Malik, 2002). Magazines, perhaps due to their location within

the light entertainment genre, constitute an under explored avenue in general and particularly in terms of racial representations. Rather, the majority of studies have focused on the gendered 'uses' of magazines (e.g. Hermes, 1995; Currie, 1999). However, the magazine has been noted for collapsing 'exoticised difference' into opportunities for consumption and 'hailing' the reader into a particular subject position through recourse to nostalgia and aestheticism (Kondo, 1997). Therefore it is my view that it is important to explore such seemingly frivolous arenas that may serve to normalize hegemonic world views through representations that are conceived within wider, culturally embedded systems of knowledge and meaning. In addition they may act as sites of subversion and contradiction through their popular consumption and irreverent perception. The possibility for these processes is explored through consumption practices in the form of the contextual responses of youths (of 'Asian' and 'white English' origin) to visual representations, as explained further below.

Central Research Questions

- *How do contemporary 'celebrations' of 'Asian culture' interact with a wider historical context of colonialism, orientalism and racisms?*
- *What part of 'Asian Culture' is being promoted and capitalised on by the forces of global capitalism?*
- *While post modern discourse on difference has enabled the recognition of 'Otherness' and the presence of multiple and changeable identities (Mirza, 1997) there is a need to ask how and by whom is 'Asian Culture' being re-presented and in what context is it being received by consumers?*
- *To what extent are 'ethnic producers' colluding with 'mainstream' portrayals of 'Asianness' and to what extent are they seeking to challenge and create different representations?*

- *How do the factors mentioned on the previous page impact on British Asian and White youth, in terms of relational dynamics within a celebrated climate of 'diaspora' and 'hybridity' and perceptions of 'Asian' as a 'trendy product'?*

- *How do constructions of 'race' and 'culture' along with notions of belonging and inclusion/exclusion come to be articulated and experienced by urban youths, across ethnicity and gender?*

Methodology

A particular strength and unique aspect of this study is the use of multiple research methods. Firstly, a comprehensive literature review has been conducted on several areas including: 'race' and culture; media and popular culture; methodologies and cultural theories. Regarding my empirical study, a social semiotic approach has been adopted in order to gain insight into: firstly, aspects of media production, through *semi structured interviews* with magazine staff. Secondly, a combination of *semiotics and discourse analysis* has been used to analyse visual discourses. Thirdly, *youth responses* to selected visual discourses have been gathered in order to allow for varying interpretations of meaning. Crucially these responses have been collected in conjunction with *biographies* of individual youths (men / women of white English and Asian origin) that also provides a means for contextualized responses to media representations. Further I have made use of biographical interviewing with an emphasis on reciprocity and reflexivity. This has been recognised as reflective of a feminist and antiracist methodology through attributing considerable control to the interviewee and reducing unequal power relations between interviewer and interviewee (see pg 111). This triangulation methodology has served as a means of qualifying findings from specific methods while greatly enriching the overall material gathered. A detailed discussion of each methodology, including strengths and weaknesses coupled with how it has been applied in my study constitutes Part Three of this thesis.

Guiding Approach

The area of cultural representation constitutes the central field of exploration and ideas gleaned from various social theories have been incorporated in this thesis (as I shall discuss in Chapter 3). However, Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) constitutes the underpinning approach of this study. This is due to the primacy given to issues of culture, power and representations of Otherness and is thus particularly relevant to my area of research. However, its particular strength is to highlight the material, political and historically located character of culture through the notion of discourse linked to colonial and postcolonial projects. This emphasis has also been taken up in my study through focusing attention on the embedded character of culture within historical socio economic contexts (see Chapters 2 and 5) and as commodities in contemporary popular culture (see Part Four).

Orientalism[1] (1978) draws attention to the essentialist and Eurocentric manner in which 'the West' has represented 'the East' through discursive means (e.g. political speeches, literature) that has given impetus to imperial projects in inferiorizing the East. As an essentialising, hegemonic practice orientalism needs to be aligned with racist discursive practices (i.e. intertwinement of discourse and practice) and the historical power of 'whiteness' to naturalize its superior positioning (see Chapters 1 and 4 for further discussion on these issues). Despite the strengths of Orientalism (1978) certain limitations have been identified (e.g. neglect of gender differentials and self-representations) which has meant a critical engagement with Orientalism in this study, as highlighted below and discussed further in Chapter 4.

Contribution to Knowledge

My study aims to contribute to various interrelated areas of knowledge in the following ways: Firstly, I aim to add to the considerable literature on

[1] It should be noted that for the purposes of this thesis, Orientalism refers to the named text (1978) and orientalism denotes the discursive practice.

orientalism through building on Edward Said's influential model. I have attempted to extend his original literature based analysis to the realm of popular culture while also adapting his approach to attend to gendered differentials and self-representations. Regarding the latter, I intend to problematise the viewing of this area as necessarily a challenge to hegemonic representations. I also intend to make problematic the idea of 'self-orientalism' that has been used by various theorists (e.g. Kondo, 1997) following Orientalism (1978) to refer to the adopting of orientalist frames of reference by Orientals themselves (see Chapter 4 for further discussion). Further, I have attempted to go beyond Said's textual focus by also incorporating varied subject responses to representations.

Secondly, through a focus on media representations of 'Asian Culture' coupled with contextual youth responses, I aim to enrich debates on 'race' and culture by illustrating the tangible role they continue to play despite their socially constructed character. It is progressive that work on 'race' has moved from an automatic association with Blackness to explorations within whiteness that challenge both its homogeneity and normalization (e.g. Gabriel, 1998). However, it is my view that the impact of whiteness on Othered identities, framed in imperialist and capitalist relations, merits continued attention through discursive practices that sustain white, Western hegemony. Therefore, I have attempted to illuminate 'white mainstream' and 'Asian minority' discursive representations of Asianness while drawing out ambivalent positionings within each on the levels of representation and consumption. Further, I intend to add to discussions on Otherness through a focus on young Asian and white Britons by exploring the idea of British Asians not just in terms of 'unknown Others' but as 'familiar strangers' (Ahmed, 2000).

At the same time, I aim to challenge the transgressiveness commonly associated with notions of 'hybridity' and 'new ethnicities' formed within the diaspora. Rather, I intend to illustrate how through the 'selling of difference' within a commodity based popular culture, minority products can be utilized without surrendering majority positions of dominance.

Therefore, I aim to show how hybridity can stand alongside racist and orientalist discourses as a marker of boundaries therefore reinforcing essentialist identities (theoretical discussion is provided in Chapter 1 and illustrative examples are given in Part Four as well as through the youth narratives, discussed in Part Five).

Finally, I intend to contribute to and broaden studies of the media through firstly, focusing on the neglected areas of Asian representations within the under researched area of magazines. Secondly, I hope to counter the under-representation of women and ethnic minorities in studies of audiences (e.g. see Cottle, 2000). Overall, I have aimed to move beyond the binary focus of much media studies through using a 'multimodal approach' (Macdonald, 2003) that seeks to explore production, textual and reception processes in a located and contextual manner.

Issues of Reflexivity

My interest in exploring representations of 'Asian Culture' comes from a personal positioning as a young Asian born and brought up in Britain. Moreover, I have spent my formative years (during the eighties) in a small suburban village where for a considerable amount of time, my family of four constituted the only 'non white faces'. A personal recollection of instances of racism during this time, from occasional racial abuse to a brick coming through our living room window, has been fed into over the years through my sociological studies that have highlighted historical and contemporary racisms on a global scale. Here, foremost in my mind has been the historical construction of 'inferior races' through slavery and imperialism and the post war depiction of Asians in Britain as 'problems' by virtue of their 'cultural difference'. The recent proliferation of 'Asian Culture' then comes to be juxtaposed against the above experiences and knowledges therefore the way 'Asian Culture' and Asianness has been and is represented became an area of personal and academic interest.

Crucially through the above processes, my own identity positionings have constantly shifted. Initially, I remember wanting to 'fit in' at schools where

I was the only/one of a few 'non white' faces. This meant, for example, when in response to being told, 'Paki Go Home' I would assert proudly that I was born 'here' and feel pleased when told that I 'didn't really look Asian'. My drowned 'Asian identity' was revived through watching Indian films at home and later at college through my first friendships with other Asians. This meant an unabashed demonstration of Asianness such as singing Indian songs loudly in the college canteen. This was then supplemented by a not exclusively, but predominantly Asian circle of friends at University, although here there were no overt celebrations of our 'Asian identity', it just 'felt right' to be together because we were all Asian. However, a visit to India, my country of origin, served to challenge the naturality with which I had over the years come to align myself with Asianness. While I had a very enjoyable time there, it became clear that ways of thinking and behaving were at times in conflict with my own which caused me on occasion to be seen as a 'Westerner'. Indeed, I cannot envision living anywhere but England which is my 'home' and feel a particular affinity with the melting pot of London, where I have now lived for a number of years. However, in view of the proliferation of 'Asian Culture' in Britain, my instinctive response is one of negativity and hostility, as if a part of me is being taken away. It is within these contexts that I became interested in learning about other young people's experiences and views and in particular that of 'youth of Asian origin' to gain some insight into their identity positionings, as well as my own.

Clarifications

The term 'Asian' covers an extensive remit and indeed in relation to America, comes to be commonly associated with East Asia (e.g. China, Japan). Cultural influences from these regions, in terms of films, food and holistic health have been so great that the United States is said to be going through a process of 'Asianization' (Cohen, 2002). While influences from East Asia on the UK are acknowledged, the present study concerns itself with 'Asian' and 'Asian culture' in terms of those individuals, cultures or artefacts originating from the Indian sub-continent (i.e. South Asia).

This is itself characterised by considerable heterogeneity in terms of culture, region, language, religion etc (see Chapter 2 for an insight).
The reasons for this research specificity resonate on various levels, primarily in terms of my own experiences as a British Asian, whose origins lie in the Indian sub-continent (as discussed earlier). Secondly, as I have illustrated in the preface, the nature of this Asian influence in British popular culture is particularly prolific. Thirdly, the specific historically constructed dynamic between Britain and the Indian sub continent with the ensuing 'marked' status of South Asians in Britain that has often been played out in a game of 'numbers' and racial stereotypes (see Chapters 2 and 5).

There is also a need to provide some clarification at the outset over terminology used in this thesis. Throughout, I have used terms such as 'race'; 'white'; 'whiteness'; 'Asian' etc and attention needs to be drawn to the constructed and contested character of such terms and labels that imply a naturality and homogeneity. While I have attempted to deconstruct these assumptions at various points in this thesis (see Chapter 1 in particular) the appearance of words in quotation marks is generally intended to challenge the normality associated with them. Lastly, where I refer to 'black', I use this to mean African-Caribbeans and 'Black' is used in its political context of denoting those 'visibly different' (e.g. in terms of skin colour) groups who have historically been racialized (e.g. blacks, Asians etc).

Having set out the central components of this thesis, the remainder of this introduction shall provide some contextual discussion on the areas of visual culture that I shall be focusing on. This is followed by a description of the thesis layout.

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Visual Media Culture

While there is no clear cut way of defining popular culture, the term may refer to those cultural facets in society deemed 'popular' which may include everything from music to food to film. However, there is much debate as to 'who' deems the popularity of culture, in terms of something that reflects the choice of the people (see Fiske, 1994) or in contrast something that is ideologically imposed by dominant powers (see Adorno, 1991). Crucially, sites of popular culture as arenas of 'pleasure' may act as a means of hegemonic consolidation, political contestation or an ambivalent mix of the two.

The mass media is recognized as the most influential and encompassing transmitter of popular culture, wielding immense power, through oral and visual discourses to 'make things mean' (Hall, 1997). For this study, the focus is on the latter due to the power of 'the visual' in transmitting messages and ideas while evoking feelings and identities that impact on a sense of inclusion and exclusion. Cultural theorists have pointed to the salience of the visual image or the 'pictorial turn', beyond text and language, in transmitting meaning in modern Capitalism (Baudrillard, 1995; Mitchell, 1994). While this is acknowledged, it is my view that the power of text is also highly influential in constructing meaning as cultural mediums often make use of both images and language, such as in magazines, as I discuss later in this introduction. In any case, the saturation of 'the visual' is so intense that 'reality' itself may be questioned, as Baudrillard states:

"It is no longer a question of imitation, nor duplication, nor even parody. It is a question of substituting the signs of the real for the real" (Baudrillard, 1995: 2).

Of particular interest is that this supposed state of 'hyperreality' is reflective of a society in crisis, one that takes refuge in images because it cannot comprehend the loss of what it once regarded as truthful or 'real'. In my view, this could translate to an emphasis on a glorified national identity of 'us' against 'them', as a response to loss of Empire.

For instance, this image is often reflected in newspaper coverage of football matches between England and Germany (see Bishop and Jaworski, 2003).

The primacy given to the image has been criticised as empty and lacking in substance through devaluing experience and history while elevating the new and stylish (Hebdige, 1988). However, the 'pleasure' derived from viewing visual images has been acknowledged which can be both insidious and empowering (Jhally, 2003; Kondo, 1997). These contradictory elements are reflected in youth responses to visual images (as shall be discussed in Chapters 10 -12). A salient point that emerges in studies on the visual is the key role images have played and continue to play with regards to the dynamics of Othering and representation that have become heightened in the age of communications media. As Pieterse states:

"Past fears and antagonisms are encoded in images and symbols, in sayings and rationalizations, which set self and other apart" (Pieterse, 1992: 9).

It has been acknowledged that the media do not operate as a homogenous, uniform purveyor of racist imagery (Hall, 1981a). However, studies of 'race' and the media (based on US and UK findings) have shown the systematic under-representation of ethnic minorities in entertainment genres and being negatively reported on in the news media (Cottle, 2000; Van Dijk, 1991). For instance, in relation to American media representations of South Asia, Bhagavan and Bari (2001) argue that discussions about South Asian economies falls into the realms of either, "reductive tropes of poverty" or to present it as "a land of market desirability" deserving of a lustful Western gaze. Through such fixed portrayals, not only are familiar orientalist images sustained, simultaneously the media construction of South Asia's poverty is magnified, disproportionalised and taken out of its historical context in contrast with Western 'development' and 'prosperity'.

In terms of the British media, Ahmad (2003) points to headline stories of South Asian British Muslims that focus on "forced marriages, teenage runaways and honour killings". Further, since September 11 this religious visibility has been taken to a new level with for example, hijab wearing women constituting the most vulnerable victims of physical and verbal assaults coupled with the resurfacing of discussions on the 'burqa' as a symbol of oppression etc. In addition, Parmar (1987) highlights the visual images of Asian women who when made visible in the British media pander to the contradictory elements of eroticism and suppression infused with the historically racist imagery of 'uncivilised black animality'.

As a counter to orientalist images, Merchant (1998) points to the photographic images taken by those from South Asian diasporas as a means of self-representation, deconstruction and reconstruction. Here Asian male and female photographers are challenging hegemonic representations through heterogeneous images that highlight a variety of experiences and influences that seek to challenge essentialist media portrayals. However, self-representation may not necessarily result in a challenge of hegemonic images, but rather may reproduce hegemonic structures. It is my view that constraints upon Asian cultural producers significantly limit the radical potential of 'their representations' (as I shall illustrate at various points in this thesis e.g. see pg 248). Further, there is evidence of a significant gap between the motivations of Asian cultural producers and expectations of Asian cultural consumers within the area of self-representation (e.g. see pg 249).

From the vast array of cultural and media arenas that stage the visual, one of my spotlights fall on the magazine photograph. The conventional view of photography reflects an autonomous, objective art form where the 'photograph doesn't lie'. This serves to marginalize debates in the field occurring in the seventies and eighties through the works of Walter Benjamin and Roland Barthes for instance, which were geared towards the reading of photographs as cultural messages (see Jones, 2003; Nichols, 1981). This draws attention to the fact that visual images are not

neutral mirrors on society and like anything that is produced and consumed are inextricably linked to their context. For instance, Dwyer and Patel's (2002) engaging study of the history of commercial Indian cinema highlights the importance of the film poster in marketing a film. Their analysis shows that the subject matter of films and accompanying advertising is reflective of socio-political circumstances of the time. For instance, they note how the beginning of internationalism in India (during the sixties) was reflected by Western style film advertising. Since the nineties, increasingly 'modern' and 'sophisticated' images constitute Indian film advertising, through the deployment of computer technology. This in turn reflects a contemporary context of middle class consumerism entwined with the ubiquitous themes of family and romance, often in diasporic settings which is underpinned by the effects of globalisation and MTV culture.

The commodification of culture and in particular, Othered cultures within a consumption orientated world, with reference to advertising, shall be discussed further in Chapter 9.

The World of Magazines

"The magazine is just a collection of signs" (Bignell, 2002: 78).

Visual culture, representation and commodification come together in the pages of magazines, home to 'multimodal discourses' (Macdonald, 2003) in terms of 'pictures' and 'words' which are what constitute the focus of the present study. Of particular interest here are women's fashion and general lifestyle magazines that not only sell a product (besides the magazine itself, the most obvious being clothes) a lifestyle and an identity but also a particular way of viewing the historical and contemporary world. Contrary to their location in the 'light entertainment genre', studies have shown that within the fashion magazine, various issues emerge concerning the objectification of sex, gender, 'race' and class as well as the politics of consumption and pleasure, where fashion itself takes on a

symbolic process (see Jobling, 1999). In common with any form of cultural production, the fashion spread or feature in a magazine not only emanates from the society in which it was produced but also comments on it. Such representations play an active role in producing meanings and reinforcing social divisions (Jobling, 1999; Pollock 1990; Sontag, 1978). These processes shall be explored through my analysis of magazine discourses (see Chapters 10 -12).

The eighties has been marked as a period when fashion publishing in Britain become more diverse and diffuse, launching magazines such as *Marie Claire* (that targeted young professional women) to stand alongside established publications such as *Vogue,* along with youth culture magazines such as *The Face* and the revolution in the men's magazine market, with titles such as *Arena* (Gough-Yates, 2003; Jobling, 1999). More recently, magazines have attempted to infiltrate our daily lives in new ways with the introduction of 'handbag sized' versions (small enough to carry everywhere) plus the avalanche of weekly celebrity gossip magazines, such as *Heat*, testimony to the 'cult of celebrity' age we find ourselves both participating in and reinforcing. In addition, the late nineties saw an increasing amount of magazines targeted at Asians born/living in Britain, that went beyond the longstanding Mumbai film based publications such as *Stardust*, for instance: *Asian Woman*, *Snoop* and *Indobrit* that aimed to embody the 'British Asian' experience.

Studies of magazines have in the main concentrated on their production aspects or gendered character. For instance, Crane (2000) argues that fashion, represented in fashion magazines has several diverse and contradictory social agendas as fashion magazines must please both advertisers, who represent media culture, as well as consumers. She also notes the changes in fashion magazine photography from minimal eroticism to advertisements outnumbering editorial and sexually provocative women in fashion lay-outs. It has been well documented that magazine advertisements have relied on stereotypical images of passive, submissive and sexualized women compared with men who are portrayed as active, autonomous and authority figures as well as the

general absence or stereotypical portrayal of ethnic minorities (see Goffman, 1979; Napoli et al, 2003). Although women are still presented in a sexual and objectified manner, not just in the overt 'lad mag' mode but in women's magazines as well, there have been changes largely as a result of women's increased economic participation. This has resulted in specifically targeted advertising for them of once masculine products, for instance, car insurance. Thus the average contemporary women's magazine presents a 'women can have it all' approach through compartmentalized pages relating to beauty and fashion, careers, personal relationships, health etc where women are portrayed as empowered and androgynous, capable of achieving goals and managing others (Crane, 2000). However in my observations, the overwhelming focus of women's popular magazines remains on appearance and is substantiated by the overwhelming space given to fashion and beauty. It should also be noted that British mainstream fashion magazines overwhelmingly operate with an implicit Eurocentric norm of beauty reflected in, for example *Marie Claire's* 'separate' page for black and Asian beauty ('the colour counter') which although reflecting a multicultural society, reinforces differences and separation.

On the subject of appearance, some men's magazines, such as GQ and Arena, while including the obligatory 'sports, girls and gadgets' have pages or special editions (e.g. *Arena Homme*) devoted to men's fashion and personal care. This is perhaps reflective of what has been called the 'metrosexual man,' in other words, a heterosexual who takes pride in his appearance and personal grooming.

In addition to issues of gender stereotyping, it has been noted in studies of British magazines and elsewhere (e.g. Australia) that Caucasian models constitute the norm. This reflects the covert racism of the fashion industry, where just the use of a black face on the cover of a magazine can result in poor sales (Jobling, 1999; Napoli, 2003). Racism in this area is also highlighted in the current study, through interviews with fashion models in their role as representatives of the fashion industry and visual media. However, what emerges are not only instances of discrimination in

the mainstream arena but also in the British Asian industry (e.g. see pg 203).

Thesis Layout

While this thesis focuses on magazines and some contextual discussion around this has been offered above, in effect the subject matter is not about magazines. Rather, as I have highlighted in the initial discussion, it is about the representation of 'Asian culture and identity' and therefore is about central themes and processes that while arising in popular culture arenas (e.g. magazines) are historically intrinsic to the fabric of society in general.

For the purposes of organization and clarity, this thesis is divided into five parts that contain specific chapters, however these are intended to be viewed as intrinsically related areas that build on and reinforce arguments made in each. These have been organized as follows:-

Part One aims to lay the contextual foundations of the study through an introduction of salient issues and subject matter. Chapter 1 then seeks to map the field of exploration through a discussion of the central themes with which this study is concerned, namely, issues of and around 'race' 'culture' and 'Otherness'. These have been and continue to be important and much debated concepts and practices in a variety of disciplines, the main points of which I aim to review and contribute to here in conjunction with areas of 'representation' and 'consumption'. Media representations have been highlighted as central to the ways in which meaning is constructed through objectifying processes that subordinate 'the Other' while engendering multiple negotiated subjectivities (Hall, 1997 ; Hallam and Street, 2000). The notion of negotiated identities has served to challenge essentialist and binary positionings of Self and Other and have moved debates to an often celebratory commentary on identities formed and existing through 'diaspora' and 'hybridity'. While at first sight these notions may offer a challenge to racial and orientalist discourses, I aim to

explore how they can also stand alongside such discourses in terms of functioning as contemporary markers of power relations and boundaries. Through processes of objectification and consumption, both unequal power relations and differences come to be increasingly naturalized and reinforced as opposed to being questioned and transcended.

The essence of the broad theoretical discussion in Chapter 1 is given illustration in Chapter 2 through a succinct socio-economic account of Asians in contemporary Britain that covers a range of areas from post 1945 immigration to employment profiles to community struggles against overt and institutional racism. This is valuably supplemented with quotes from the youth narratives I have collected.

Part Two consists of focusing on the theoretical and historical location of cultural representations. Therefore Chapter 3 includes a review of central approaches to cultural theory, namely: *Marxisms; Structuralism; Cultural Studies; Feminisms; Postmodernism and Postcolonialism.* These are all discussed in terms of their strengths and limitations in relation to the present study, with a particular focus on the role of media and 'race' in issues of representation. Elements of and ideas from all these schools of thought have been used to a greater/lesser extent in this thesis. It should be noted however, that I adhere to the view that established theories are essentially a set of ideas that while have become accepted discourses are not beyond reproach. In addition, I acknowledge the limitations involved in using exclusively Eurocentric based theories to assess issues of 'race' and cultural representation, thereby reinforcing European hegemony over 'knowledge'. While this may be seen as reflection of my personal indoctrination into European systems of thought through being born and educated in 'the West', it is hoped that through the use of critical approaches, such as Orientalism (1978), some effort is made to challenge Eurocentricism. This theme is returned to in the concluding discussion. At the same time, the location of Orientalism and Postcolonial Theory more generally within Western academies limits the possibility of

moving beyond European based knowledges, as I shall discuss further in this chapter.

This then leads onto Chapter 4 that consists of a critical discussion of the main ideas of Said's groundbreaking text, *Orientalism* that is commonly seen as the instigator for Postcolonial theory and is a significant influence on the conception and aims of the present study. This chapter highlights the key themes of his text together with an evaluation of its main critiques in order to illustrate how the approach has been used in my research. Far from the demise of European empires signifying the death of orientalism, I aim to explore the extent to which orientalist discourses have refurbished and reconstituted to meet the challenges of contemporary globalization. This becomes all the more pertinent in a post September 11 world and the subsequent wars on terror which have propelled the East or Orient once more to the forefront of the gaze and judgement of the West. In this climate, it is important to explore how the rise of imperialist nostalgia has affected the media's role in reifying orientalist stereotypes of peoples and cultures in and originating from post-colonial nations.

Chapter 5 provides historical instances of orientalism and challenges to orientalism. Here a number of studies are explored that have exposed varying orientalist ideologies and representations along with indigenous representations in popular colonial discourses during the British Raj, with a particular emphasis on differential representations based on gender. The important influence of history on the contemporary forms an underpinning current of this study, not as a 'direct train from past to present' (Banton, 2000) but in terms of continuing pervasive ideologies and practices that have served to frame groups within a socio-economic context of racialized power relations.

Having set out the central issues, subject matter and theories, Part Three consists of an in-depth discussion of the methodologies that have been used in the empirical part of this study. This is a comprehensive section and important part of the thesis that documents attempts to investigate

my research questions in as complete manner as possible. This has involved approaching issues of 'race', culture and identity as entwined within a contextualized system of media representation that looks at: production aspects, textual analysis and reader responses within individual life experiences. In this way, I have aimed to go beyond much media research that operates on an either/or methodological and area concentration, as highlighted below.

Chapter 6 consists of a description of the interview methodology used in this study that begins with media producers. While this study does not have a political economy focus, I have attempted to make a small inroad into areas of production through gathering the views and motivations of cultural producers. This constitutes semi-structured interviews with 4 members of staff from 'British mainstream' and 'British Asian' magazines as well as representatives of the visual culture industry, in the form of 2 fashion models. It has been well documented that this is an under researched area of the media largely due to problems with access and suspicions of research motives etc. This, coupled with space limitations has meant that this area remains neglected in my research compared with areas of textual analysis and reader responses. However some valuable material has been gathered from the producers and representatives that I spoke to where ambivalences and contradictions are highlighted in their own roles, along with gaps between their aims and the expectations of young cultural consumers (as shall be discussed in Part Five).

The remainder of Chapter 6 consists of a discussion of interview methodology relating to members of the youth public (characterised as 18-30yrs). Biographically based interviews with 20 men and women of South Asian origin and white English origin have been conducted in order to gain insight into the life experiences and opinions of individual youths, residing in London. This was chosen primarily for its cosmopolitan character and for enabling relatively easy access to interviewees, being a London resident myself. Salient themes have been drawn from the

biographies with a 'constructivist' use of Grounded Theory (see pg 107) for analysis of material, the findings of which constitute Part Five. The biographical method was seen to be the most appropriate interviewing tool for this study that inevitably covers issues of a personal and potentially emotive nature yet allows the interviewee to have significant control over the nature of the interview. However, the approach is not without limitations and no claim is made to having gathered a 'real' account of experiences/views through the avenue of narration. As with any qualitative method, the material gathered hinges on a number of variables, such as establishing successful rapport; recollection of past events from the standpoint of the present and perception of the interview situation and interviewer. Certainly regarding the latter point, my own positioning as a young, British Asian woman conducting the interviews was seen to have an important influence on the type of narratives offered, with many Asian women in particular assuming a commonality of experiences. A thorough discussion of such issues related to the interview methodology along with a procedural account and details of the sample of young people, in the form of a biographical synopsis of each individual closes this chapter hence providing some context for later parts of the study.

Chapter 7 concentrates on a step by step account of the tools chosen to analyse magazine visual discourses in terms of images and written text that revolves around a three-fold social semiotic approach, described briefly here as follows: Firstly, regarding magazine images, a *semiotically* based analysis has been applied, influenced primarily by Barthes' study of French popular culture: 'Mythologies' (1973). This focuses on how the signs and symbols contained within an image function firstly, on the level of description but secondly on an ideological level that serves to normalise existing power relations through the construction of 'myths'. The practice of semiotics has been criticised largely due to its association with structuralism, which emphasises a scientific approach to viewing cultural elements in fixed, system terms. However, as I explain in this chapter, semiotics when applied in a looser, reflexive manner constitutes

a useful way of viewing the 'signs' contained within an image as an important transmitter of meaning. Here then some theoretical background to the semiotical tradition is provided, assessing its strengths and weaknesses coupled with a detailed explanation of how I have applied this method to the present study.

Secondly, regarding magazine text, I have made use of *discourse analysis* in the Foucauldian tradition of assessing the way language is constructed to function as a source of knowledge and power. Of particular interest is *critical discourse analysis* that as a departure from its Foucauldian origins, views power not as universally circular but largely concentrated in a few 'elite' hands. As such, this approach has been applied in various studies of the media (Fairclough, 1995; Van Dijk, 1985). As before, this section provides some theoretical background and assessment of strengths and weaknesses of the approach along with a guide to my use of it in the present study. Although semiotics and discourse analysis are often perceived as contrasting methodologies, there is much to unite them, primarily in terms of the focus on 'language' and power as a means to construct difference and hegemonic relations, albeit with different emphasis. For these reasons, I have made use of both approaches, which can also be linked to the discursive practice of orientalism that revolves around issues of language and power.

Significantly, the above textual focus is widened and enhanced through the incorporation of the responses of the 20 youths to the visual discourses that I have chosen and analysed for this study. This forms an interesting and crucial part of the empirical study as it has been argued that the 'meaning' of representations is not contained within itself but constructed in the 'interaction' between viewer and text (Lewis, 1996) which again is fuelled within a larger system of knowledge. This takes its cue from *audience studies* that highlight the subversive potential of popular culture and the negotiated readings of cultural consumers. Particular emphasis is given to Stuart Hall's encoding/decoding model (1981b) of identifying reading patterns amongst audiences which is used

in the present study with some modifications. In Chapter 8, I provide some theoretical background to audience studies with an assessment of strengths and weaknesses coupled with an account of how this approach has been introduced in my study.

The part concludes with some reflection on general methodological issues in terms of limitations that have emerged during the course of the study and suggestions for further research.

This theoretical and methodological basis leads to Part Four which forms a pivotal point of the thesis that seeks to illustrate points made in the previous parts as well as incorporating the subjective views with which the parts that follow shall be concerned with. While this study focuses on cultural representations, it has been emphasised that notions and practices of 'culture' need to be seen as located within material processes. Chapter 9 therefore focuses on processes of cultural commodification. In other words, how those cultures constructed as Other come to be dissected, with the parts deemed desirable for 'mainstream' consumption utilized in a capitalist and globalized context. This chapter consists of a discussion of the usage and 'selling' of the Other in general, and 'the Asian Other' in particular, within various arenas of popular culture and the media, namely: *music, cinema* and *advertising*. There is a particular focus on America in this chapter which although not deliberate illustrates its monopolization of Western popular culture.

This paves the way for my empirical study that consists of semiotical and discursive analysis of media representations of Asian Otherness in the form of magazine visual discourses. This is supplemented throughout with responses from individual youths. Chapter 10 is constituted by a comprehensive analysis of 4 photographic images from British 'mainstream' and British 'Asian' magazines. This is followed by analysis of 24 pieces of written text in the form of headlines/sub headings that for organizational purposes have been presented within subjectively defined themes that describe the character and varying type of discourse.

For practical purposes, headers from British mainstream magazines are presented in Chapter 11 and from British Asian magazines in Chapter 12. As I explain in Part Three, these visual discourses have been selected from a variety of British 'mainstream' and 'Asian' women's fashion and lifestyle magazines on a highly subjective basis of interest and potential to provoke reaction, the limitations of which I openly acknowledge during discussion. At the same time, the opinions of individual youths on these discourses which these three chapters incorporate is hoped to provide space for alternative analyses that may or may not engender majority patterns of thought. However, individual interpretation is valued for and in itself that is reflected in the decision to also gather youth biographies as opposed to just asking for textual readings divorced from personal context, as many reader response studies have done (e.g. Collins and Lutz, 1993). As such, the importance of contextualized and situated knowledge is highlighted.

Part Five seeks to contextualise and assess these subjective responses to visual discourses within a detailed presentation and discussion of the findings from youth biographies. These are presented in terms of salient themes that emerged from a grounded analysis of the material itself. For organizational purposes again, findings are presented in the form of three chapters that each group together emergent themes and issues although are all intrinsically related. Thus Chapter 13 consists of material that highlights issues and experiences relating to historical processes, 'race' and identifications of ethnicity. Chapter 14 focuses on various themes relating to the conceptualization and uses of 'culture' while Chapter 15 documents issues of agency, freedom and inclusions in terms of the 'youth subject'. A salient point to emerge from the narratives is the naturalized and essentialist conceptions of 'race', culture and Otherness that serve to challenge a postmodern view of having gone 'beyond the skin' towards harmonious hybrid identities or what has triumphantly been called the 'generation of ethnic ambiguity' (see Arlidge, 2004).

Drawing on the rich variety of primary and secondary data used for this research study, the concluding discussion seeks to reflect on the study itself and the salient issues that have emerged. Particular discussion is provided on the complex issues of 'race', culture and representations within and beyond a context of media construction of identities as well as differentiated subject positionings. What is highlighted through this discussion is the importance of the acknowledgement of racial and cultural 'difference' to people's lives however, it is my view that the historical 'construction' of differences and positionalities needs to be emphasised at the earliest age. This has implications for macro policy (e.g. education) and in terms of micro processes (e.g. interpersonal dialogues). It is hoped that through an illumination of 'naturalized differences', hegemonic representations may be questioned and a space found for alliances to *also* be made on a non-essentialist basis.

PART ONE
Mapping the Field

The initial chapters that follow serve to set out the central themes with which this study is concerned, namely issues of and around: 'race', culture and Otherness coupled with a socio economic overview of the position of 'Asians' in Britain, who constitute the subject of this study. This serves to contextualize the later theoretical and empirical chapters of this thesis.

Chapter 1: Central Issues

This thesis consists of delving into issues that crosscut various thematic fields principally in sociology and cultural studies, namely debates and works on: 'race' and racisms, ethnicity, identity and popular culture coupled with the intertwining areas that these involve, for instance, inclusion/exclusion, issues of Self and Other, inequality, cultural representation and interpretation, media and globalization which all involve power relations. While these are discussed through subsequent chapters, what I want to do in this opening chapter is to set out a contextual discussion of the salient themes with which this thesis is concerned and within which the chapters that follow can be located, namely the interrelated issues of *'race' culture and Otherness.*

'Race' Matters

A central if highly problematic place to start is in deconstructing the increasingly tabooed term 'race' and by tabooed, reference is to its frowned upon usage in our politically correct climate as opposed to its continued resonance in minds and structural processes. Here issues and representations of 'race' become shielded within debates on culture, identity, ethnicity, nation and in a post 911 context, finds itself nestling within political discourses on Western civilized democracy verses Eastern barbaric despotism.

The term 'race' has been the focus of academic and political debate since the seventeenth century in terms of its implied reference to a natural and biological state and subsequently engendering natural differences with other 'races', for instance, on the basis of skin colour, physical characteristics or innate intelligence (Cottle, 2000;Gabriel,1994). While there are physical differences between peoples, the essentialising nature of 'race' has increasingly been challenged and within academic circles it is now generally acknowledged that 'race', like gender, serves as a socio-

historical marker of difference. This serves as a challenge to 'race' as a biological determinant of intelligence, character etc and for this reason it has been argued that its use is invalid in an era that no longer relies on scientific racism. Rather than giving the construct of 'race' authenticity it has been argued that racism and processes of racialization should be the focus of analysis (Miles, 1993;Ross, 1996). It is widely acknowledged that racism crystallizes in various forms, from overt, verbal and/or physical attack to more insidious institutional and cultural forms so that to speak in the plural sense of racisms is more appropriate. Racisms can be identified as both ideology and practice that through processes of Othering (Wieviorka, 1995) attribute fixed, essentialized characteristics to peoples. This is promoted as a natural, hegemonic view for the purposes of unequal power relations and outcomes between individuals/groups (Anthias, 1995). It should also be noted that racisms not only serve to 'mark out' and make visible a particular group but at the same time to omit, exclude and distort them through processes of representation (Malik, 2002). However, it needs to be acknowledged that racialized processes and relations are intrinsically linked to historically framed ideas of 'race' that continue to resonate in discourses, institutional practices and lived experiences. The fact that articles disputing the validity of 'race' continue to be written in the 21st century (e.g. Rose and Rose, 2005) reflects its ingrained status. Moreover, the pervasiveness of racial ideological practice means that simply dispensing with the category of 'race' would not challenge racisms (Gilroy, 1993a) that in contemporary society operates widely and insidiously through the seemingly rose paved avenues of 'culture'.

Most of the youths I interviewed for this study spoke consistently in racial terms: 'Asian race' 'white race' 'non white race' and crucially in terms of a naturality, inevitability and fixity that often centred on notions of skin colour and colour difference that enmeshed with culture (see Chapters 13 and 14). As has been noted elsewhere, skin colour remains one of the most significant markers for the construction of 'race' in the West (Gilman, 1995). However, processes of racism and racialisation cannot

exclusively be linked to skin colour as is made pertinent through the anti-refugee discourse in the popular media. Here 'white' groups come to be demonized and excluded from reinforced national boundaries, not in terms of skin colour but in terms of displacement and dispossession, in what has been called a 'Xeno-racism' (see Richardson, 2004). However, as with all forms of racism, unequal power relations underpin and enable the dynamic. This is not entirely a new practice of course and at the extreme while Nazi Germany may be pointed to, Pieterse (1992) has highlighted how racialized labels have historically been applied to different groups, including 'whites' (e.g. the Irish as 'niggers') for the means of ideological and structural subjugation.

Further, the struggle over the inclusion of the Irish and Jews into 'whiteness' reflects the limitation associated with an essentialist view of identity. Attention to 'subaltern whiteness' (see Gabriel, 1998) coupled with attention to gender, class and ethnicity serves as some challenge to the supremacy and homogeneity commonly associated with whiteness. In recent years there has been an attempt to make whiteness an object of study within the field of 'race' (see Gabriel,1998;Hill, 1997). This process of making 'white' visible decentres it through an emphasis on its socially constructed nature as opposed to its naturality. This also challenges the naturalized association of issues of 'race' with Black histories, people and cultures. As Dyer states:

"As long as race is something only applied to non-white people, as long as white people are not racially seen..they/we function as a human norm. Other people are raced, we are just people" (Dyer, 1988: 45).

An illustration of the fragmentation of 'whiteness' can be seen through the youth narratives I collected that serve to challenge both its desirability (e.g. see pg 220) and its homogenous character (e.g. see pg 242). However, what emerges more prominently is the normalization of whiteness and the implicit linking of whiteness with Englishness/Britishness (e.g. see pg 217).

Orientalism (1978) highlights how historically the discursive power of the white West has strengthened and been strengthened by the forces of imperialism and more recently, global capitalism. The unequal political-economic power relations between West and East allows for the neo-colonial travel of white cultural influence to 'other worlds' (see Shome, 1999). This also enables whiteness to appropriate and commodify those aspects of Othered cultures deemed desirable and saleable as I shall highlight at various points in this thesis (e.g. see Chapter 9). Therefore, whiteness (while a problematic concept) is not just about the power of white bodies / skin colour but about discursive practices that have historically sustained white/Eurocentric global domination (Said, 1978; Shome, 1999). It is therefore important to not just move studies of 'race' to explorations of whiteness per se but how the discursive effects of whiteness impacts on the identities and lived realities of whites and non-whites. This thesis attempts to do this through exploring 'white mainstream' and 'British Asian' representations of 'Asian culture' coupled with the views and experiences of youths, of white English and Asian origin.

It is significant that in a much touted postmodern, hybridized climate, essentialized differences appear to play a central, although certainly complex, part in determining feelings of inclusion and exclusion to a group or society, as shall become apparent in the latter parts of this thesis. Indeed the continuing validity of the concept of 'race' in terms of its role in constructing boundaries and organizing life practices around has been recognized elsewhere (Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1992 ; Gilroy, 1987). However, the problematic nature of 'race' as a means of mobilization has been highlighted that assumes a singular identity in racial terms as well as of course determining the basis of who belongs to what 'race' (Gabriel, 1994). It is here that the limits of rigid labels for active agents arises, for instance around normalized terms such as 'black' and 'white' that in effect submerge important individual and group specifics within a polarizing totality. These may be identified as gender,

ethnicity, class, religion, sexuality and locality as well as less politicized characteristics such as personality.

The labyrinth that ensues from belongings based on essentialist constructions can be seen when it is asked, for instance, what does the term, 'black' mean? While Black as a mode of political organization has been used, particularly during the seventies and eighties, to incorporate those 'visibly different' groups in terms of a shared solidarity against historically constructed experiences of racisms, its insufficiency as a category has been highlighted in terms of glossing over differential experiences that may be based on, for instance, ethnicity, religion and culture. For instance, Modood has highlighted that the category of Asian needs to be separated from the category Black (Modood,1997) and within the category of Asian he has highlighted the specific discriminations facing the British Muslim population that stems from the demonisation of Islam in the West and the need for political incorporation of Muslim interests (Modood, 2005). In contrast, Gilroy (1993a) points to the emphasis on ethnic differences within 'black communities' as indicative of the cultural character of contemporary racisms therefore weakening the power of struggle against racisms.

These complexities are compounded further in the age of globalization and the proliferation of technologies of communication aiding multiple identifications of peoples that may crosscut or challenge the meaning of origin in any sense, including alluding to a 'common racial origin'. Such factors entwined with the complex spectrum of racisms characterizing the contemporary period (straddling individualized, institutional and cultural forms) coupled with an emphasis on ethnic and cultural specificity has been claimed to signal the 'death of the essential black subject' (Hall,1991). A theoretical splitting of a singular identity based on 'race' has engendered for instance, a focus on aspects of gender and sexuality (Butler, 1990) youth hybrid cultures or 'new ethnicities' (Back, 1996) identities that are transnational (Gilroy, 1993b) or based on transpositionality (Anthias, 2002). In addition, there has been claims that

a 'convivial culture' (Gilroy, 2004) is in progress that places emphasis on the day to day interactions of different races and cultures that goes beyond 'race' in urban Britain. What these all point to are the existence and performance of interrelated identities that seemingly take us beyond notions of identity fixity. However, as I shall discuss shortly in this chapter (and illustrate through Part Five) the youth who I interviewed for this study, are clinging to fixed notions of identity along racial and cultural lines.

While issues of identity shall be discussed further in the remainder of this chapter, what is of particular significance to this study is that in contemporary society the fixing of racial difference has shifted from biology to become increasingly fixed and veiled through culture (Barker, 1981). However historically framed hierarchies and ideas of 'race' continue to underpin notions and representations of culture and as such 'race' continues to matter. It is to a discussion of culture as it operates as a source of solidarity, marker of difference and form of representation that I now want to turn.

The Problematic of Culture

The term culture constitutes a normalised part of commonsense language however the actual meaning of culture or the frame of reference used to define it is far from clear (e.g. see Chapter 14 in relation to youth narratives). In addition, it generally appears to be older males who actually tend to set cultural agendas while claiming to represent the 'cultural community' (Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1992). It is with these issues in mind that areas of self-representation within cultural minorities need to be viewed. As I shall discuss in Chapter 4 with reference to Said's Orientalism, self-representation *by* ethnic minorities may be seen as a satisfactory alternative to hegemonic representations *of* ethnic minorities. However, this too readily assumes homogenous and equal subject positions and interests by virtue of group marginality. Further, as I shall illustrate in terms of British Asian cultural producers and consumers,

there may be significant differences in what is viewed as successful self-representation (e.g. see pgs 246-250).

In addition, the harmonious union implicit in terms such as 'my culture'; 'our culture'; 'Asian culture' is challenged by the continued tenacity of social divisions such as gender, class, age, ethnicity, sexuality etc. Despite this, speaking in terms of a 'cultural identity' is not only normal but in some cases is advocated as a basis for anti-racist political alliance (e.g. Modood, 1997). However, the cultural basis for alliance constitutes unstable ground in view of the fact that cultures, as with 'race' and gender are constructed socially through histories, power-infused knowledges and interactions, that while through regular usage have become naturalized does not necessarily mean they have an organic existence. As Baldwin states:

"Is it possible to describe as a culture what may simply be, after all a history of oppression?...For what beyond the fact that all black men and women at one time or another left Africa or have remained there, what do they really have in common?" (Baldwin, 1985: 49).

The ambiguity associated with the term culture has been well documented with various theorists speaking of culture as a complex concept (Williams, 1976) a dynamic social process (Bhabha, 1994) or being seen as a fixed property of the Other (Chatterjee, 1993). An example of the latter can be seen in discussions of culture and patriarchy which tend to pathologize South Asian women within sexual and cultural oppression whereas other Western/white women only confront sexism (Purewal, 2003) as if culture has no bearing on 'white bodies'. Culture as the territory of the Other and in particular as something represented by 'female Others' is an issue that also emerges in my youth interviews (see Chapters 14 and 15).

The perception of culture as a closed, unified object has increasingly come to be rejected along with the view that cultural identity is an ideal, fixed condition that individuals seek to preserve. Subsequently, cultures

never remain static, "pure" and true to their origin, especially in the process of diaspora and as such identity itself is said to be 'under erasure' as a result of social, political and philosophical upheavals (Hall,1992). While culture may be a constantly changing process, Narayan (1998) makes the valid point that culturalist generalizations have sought to construct homogenous and unchanging categories of identification around 'Asian women', 'Muslim women' and 'Western women.' As a result, stereotypes associated with these different groupings abound, hence the prevalent view of Asian women as 'passive', 'dependent' and 'gentle' despite evidence to the contrary that illustrates the active role Asian women have played in various forms of political intervention (Brah,1996) as discussed at later points in this thesis (e.g. see pg 60).

Although the idea of diaspora and related ideas of hybridity may involve a dynamic and creative conception of identity, in my view there are important limitations that need to be considered, as discussed below.

In the Mix: Diaspora and Hybridity

Work involving notions of diaspora and hybridity has attempted to dislodge fixed conceptions of identity while recognising the intimate relationships between cultures and hence the existence of more culturally fluid and transnational positionalities (Anthias, 1998; Gilroy, 1993b). This has led to a number of studies focusing on youth cultures and syncretic identities (e.g. Back, 1996; Chow, 1993) that point to identifications away from racial, ethnic and national essentialisms. Such studies focusing on the formation of 'new ethnicities', amidst the productive tension between global and local influences, seek to challenge what it means to be 'black', 'British' etc and are argued to be challenging the terms of racial inclusion and exclusion. For instance, Les Back (1996) in his study of the interactions between urban 'white' and 'black' youth points to the development of 'syncretic expressions' in language and music that construct 'a new heritage'. The thread that runs through Back's study is

the apparent rejection of 'race' and racism by young people and the challenging of constricted definitions of Englishness with the opening up of black cultural symbols to white appropriation resulting in identification with black people and symbols. However, in my view this practice could also be viewed as a form of racism through cultural colonization and in any case the identification with symbols of 'the Other' has always existed but that doesn't imply a denial of 'race' or rejection of racism. For instance, it has been argued that although second generation South Asian-Americans identify extensively with hip-hop culture, they continue to hold on to the strategic ideas of 'model minority' that serve to elevate one minority grouping over another thus placing responsibility for success within communities and absolving institutional blame (Maharaj, 2002/Web source). In addition, participation in and/or consumption of a 'minority culture' may serve to reinforce binary positions and unequal power relations. Here products/activities seen as desirable, according to dominant forces, come to be detached from undesirable racialized bodies and origins within a commodity culture and used to enhance hegemonic positionalities without necessarily surrendering them (e.g. see Chapters 9 and 10).

While acknowledging the value of studies that highlight the existence of an 'intermezzo culture' (Back,1996) amongst the younger generations, my interviews (see Part Five) reflect that the youth state of affairs is not quite so melodic and devoid of essentialisms, albeit riddled with ambivalences and contradictions. As one of my interviewees[2] said:

"I just don't like it when white people wear Indian styles... they just think they can muscle in on everything.....I have had some really close white friends but I still don't think its right, it doesn't belong to them" (Shalini, 20yrs, student, identifies as Indian).

Rather, many of the young Asians born in Britain that I spoke to are seeking to hold on to notions of a 'pure' cultural and racial identity as a means of self preservation in the face of racisms. In this context, cultural

[2] A biographical synopsis of each interviewee can be found on pgs 115-122

practices of fusion are looked upon with suspicion and disdain, as I shall discuss in detail later in this thesis (see Chapters 13 and 14). This serves to challenge the view that alternative identities exist in a "third space" through displacing history (Bhabha, 1994). It is my view that this 'third space' that evolves from certain histories cannot readily displace those histories and more to the point, in the face of sustained racism and exclusions may seek to hold on to historical formations. This also contrasts with assertions of a 'convivial culture' (Gilroy, 2004) emerging within and among Britain's urban youth which optimistically seeks to relegate ideas of 'race' and processes of racisms either to an older generation and/or the Establishment.

On a surface level, Diaspora refers to the 'dispersion' or scattering of people belonging to one nation or having a 'common culture' beyond the land of origin (Cunningham and Sinclair, 2000). The relocation of such cultures across time and space can be said to give rise to mixing and fusion or in other words hybrid cultural forms. Further thought on these issues however creates difficulties, as for instance, who constitutes an Asian or Indian? In other words is it sufficient to characterize the Indian diasporic community as 'Indian' given that it is constituted of such diversity as Canadian Sikhs and South African Hindus etc, on the basis of a 'common' country of origin, with all the intricate differences which that very origin may have for different groups and individuals (Manas/Web Source). In addition, it is difficult to analyse these differences when important factors such as gender and class also impact on any construction of diaspora and therefore challenge the common experience that diaspora implies (Anthias, 1998). Further, paying scant attention to the fractions within diasporas is in essence replicating the homogenising nature of a host of racist discourses, namely: colonialism, orientalism and more contemporary political and cultural coded discourses of 'race'. Moreover, in trying to reach beyond the importance of 'race' and ethnicity, notions of diaspora and hybridity can in effect serve as a means to conceal, refute and even erase the existence of orientalism, racism etc for both minority and hegemonic groups. In other words:

"...forget colonial violence, white supremacy and systematic exploitation and oppression: hybridity saves" (Hutnyk, 2000: 116).

In addition, what is rarely commented upon in discussions of diaspora are the existence of past and present majority European diasporas (an exception being Cohen, 1997) for instance the British travellers, painters and writers who before and during Empire, voluntarily moved from their homelands into new regions such as India. This has impacted on the experiences of the Indian diaspora with research findings pointing to an increased assertion of Indianness within Indian diasporic communities (see Ray, 2000). The notion of Indians in the diaspora being 'more Indian' than the Indian in India has, to some extent, been linked to the rise in nationalism within the members of the South Asian diasporas heralding a form of 'nationalism from afar' (Anderson, 1991; Van de Veer, 1995) perhaps due to guilt and over-compensation (Anthias, 1997). This may also be seen as a reaction to experiences of racism and exclusion, leading to the need to feel part of something and important to something, as is reflected in my interviews with 'youth of Asian origin' (see Chapter 13 e.g. pg 216-217).

The impact on relational dynamics raised by questions of diaspora and hybridity is clearly an important and multi-faceted one, leading to the instability of the signs of national identity and the disruption of the idea of the 'mother country,' the 'homeland' as well as the nation and Empire (Clifford,1994 ; Mercer,1994). At the same time, it needs to be seen to what extent this voice really can threaten the dominant culture when it is a voice that relies heavily on notions of cultural identity, hence depoliticising culture and ignoring majority hybridities (Anthias, 1999). In this way, concepts such as hybridity and diaspora, as with culture, become associated with ethnic minorities which enables hybridity itself to be sold as simply another marketable commodity of popular culture. Further, the actual sustainability of sub-cultural productions is questionable within the fickle world of popular culture where the co-option

of a cultural product into the mainstream signals its end or at least places limits on its radical and challenging potential (see Chapter 9 and pg 253).

It is also noted that the whole idea of hybridity necessarily implies its emergence from a 'pure origin' (Diawara, 1991) which leads to questions relating to the multiplicity of origins involved. Hence a 'who is the purest of them all' logic prevails, the dangers of which need little elaboration in view of the various 'ethnic cleansing' atrocities that have taken place around the world. In addition, Solomos and Back (1996) point to Nazi ideology and symbolism as illustrations of hybridity not necessarily meaning a transgressive politics or agenda, as do the less celebrated forms of hybridity, for example, colonial imposition and obligatory assimilation (Shohat and Stam, 1994). In light of the above discussion, it may be more useful and important to approach hybridity not just in terms of a cultural description or celebration but in terms of its possible conflation with historical and contemporary practices of domination. As Kraidy states:

"Grounded in an intercontextual theory of hybridity, critical cultural transnationalism emphasizes hybridities as practices of hegemony....it helps us illuminate the slippery and interstitial workings of power in transnational contexts that ostensibly declare themselves nonpower zones of cultural mixture" (Kraidy, 2002: 335).

As can be seen, the complexities involved in discussing notions of culture, diaspora and hybridity are compounded through attempting to deconstruct them, which leads to questions that revolve around issues of authenticity, appropriation and crucial to this study, the dynamic of Self and Other, that serve to map out internal homogeneity and external difference. It is to a discussion of this that I now turn.

Otherness

"Who constitutes the Self (the acceptable, the insider, the familial) and who the Other (the stranger, the outsider, the alien) is the warp and woof of all British migration history and the basic ingredient of a British identity" (Cohen, 1995: 59).

The conception and symbiotic dynamics of what is perceived to be the Self: *I* and that which is not the Self: *Other* (that may be seen in various and intertwining forms, for instance: the racial Other, the gendered Other, the religious Other etc) constitutes a fundamental and complex aspect of issues of identity and representation.

Mainstream Western metaphysics in the form of Descartes and Plato has conventionally denied Otherness through proclaiming the Self as a unitary totality with complete knowledge (Gandhi, 1998). As such anything that is not 'I' serves to break the boundaries of the separate identity of the Self which is then threatened (Kearney, 2003). This omission of the Other in Cartesian philosophy has been challenged by theories from a variety of positions within and outside of the philosophical tradition that seek to emphasis the mutually constitutive relationship of Self and Other in varying degrees. For instance, within the realm of philosophy, Sartre has conceptualized an integral connection between Self and Other that views the Self as a mirror of the world and Others (Baron, 1994). For Husserl the encounter with the Other is actually experience of an original entanglement arising from the dependency of the Self on the Other. Here the subject is seen to possess a transcendental subjectivity that allows the alterity of the Other to appear and to be expressed (see Bernet, 2000). Levinas argues against this through asserting that the Other's existence means more than the possibility for Self thought and that the Other's presence is something more than a fulfilment of the Self. For Levinas, the Other is viewed as lacking but through 'the face of the Other' that is seen to bear the trace of God, claim and guilt is layed on the Self for the individual Other's suffering. As a result, the Self must be substitution, gift of itself or giving away of itself. The encounter with the Other becomes one of 'proximity' as opposed to confrontation however this is not in terms of a 'fusion' between Self and Other hence there remains difference and separation (see Bernet, 2000). This last point can be seen through both media representations and youth narratives in varying degrees (see Parts Four and Five) however what emerges is a state of 'expected' confrontation

and binary positionings that overrides proximity. It shall also be interesting to note how the hegemonic Self rather than the Other can be portrayed and perceived as 'lacking' in some way within a context of consumer culture, where the 'taking on' of the Other through consuming cultural products is seen to complete or enhance the Self (e.g. see pg 235). In this sense, contrary to Levinasian thought the Asian Other exists to enhance the white, hegemonic Self.

In addition, Levinas highlights an acceptance and even celebration of the Other without reducing the Other to the Self (see Brinker-Gabler, 1995). Therefore while centrality and power is attributed to the Self, there also emerges in Levinasian thought, an empowering conception of the Other that does not necessarily mean reducing the Other's being to the Self and on the Self's terms. This is an important conceptualization in terms of those groups who have been historically constructed as Others and whose racial and cultural existence has been defined according to hegemonic terms. While the dominant structures and ideologies may be difficult to reverse, there is some hope that through a refiguring of Otherness, experiences and perceptions can effect change at the level of personal identity and interactions. Here difference is maintained but need not necessarily be seen in objectifying and negative terms, a vision I shall return to in the concluding discussion.

Further conceptions of Self and Other come from (as explored in greater depth in Chapter 4) Said's Orientalism (1978) that seeks to highlight the historical constitution of Eastern Otherness through the 'permeability' of cultures that in turn constituted European identity. In a similar vein, Hall has discussed how the formation of Englishness is framed in terms of a history of global expansion and imperialism, therefore Englishness is constituted through the representation of the colonised Other (Hall, 1991). From a psychoanalytical perspective, Bhabha has built on and complexified Said's notion of orientalism as a binary discourse by claiming simultaneity of the Self (i.e. the West) and the Other (i.e. the Orient) while pointing to ambivalent notions of 'fantasy' and 'desire'

through the idea of 'colonial mimicry'. This signifies the dominant Self's desire for a reformed, recognizable Other as a subject of a difference that is 'almost the same, but not quite / white' therefore the representation of difference is itself a process of disavowal (Bhabha, 1994). Here the colonized are simultaneously portrayed as 'child-like' and 'savage' requiring them to be controlled hence the Other occupies a position of both 'desire and fear'. As has been noted elsewhere, contemporary racisms simultaneously court notions and practices of 'desire and fear' (Solomos and Back, 1996). This state of ambivalence can be seen through magazine visual discourses and youth narratives (in Parts Four and Five respectively).

From a linguistic stance, Bakhtin claims that Others are needed to substantiate the Self in the sense that the 'I' needs to be viewed as an Other in order for dialogue to occur which is seen as a necessary process for the accumulation of knowledge (see Sanjuan,1998). It is my view that the highlighting of 'difference' is a necessary precondition for dialogue of some form to occur and through which there remains a possibility for hegemonic representations to be questioned, a point I return to in the concluding discussion.

Moving the debate away from Self and Other, Ahmed (2000) argues that a concentration on Otherness has been at the expense of neglecting 'strangerness'. Her argument problematises the idea of a homogenous Other by pointing to the role of 'differentiated Others', in terms of those bodies that are familiar and those that are inassimilable in the demarcation of national identity. Ahmed claims that it is through the process of welcoming / dispelling the stranger that the figure of the stranger is 'produced' hence the stranger is already known as 'the body out of place'. The crux of Ahmed's argument is that the figure of 'the stranger' is produced through knowledge, not a lack of and therefore the Other who is recognizable as Other is not far away but is necessarily 'close enough' and serves to consolidate legitimate claims to the nation. This is an important and relevant notion for this study that in effect

consists of how British Asians as 'familiar strangers' ('familiar' due to a six decade presence in 'multicultural Britain' and a much longer history of British-Asian relations yet 'strange' due to racialized difference) come to be represented and perceived within hegemonic frames of national belonging. In addition, the issue of 'knowledge' in terms of substance and source is important here and as I shall illustrate later in this thesis (e.g. see pg 244) 'knowledge' of 'Asians' and 'Asian culture' is valued less on the level of personal interaction and more through 'racialized regimes of representation' (Hall, 1997). In this sense, 'Asian' or 'Asian culture' is always already known on the level of a racialized 'familiar difference'.

I want to now conclude this chapter with some points on the representation and consumption of Otherness.

Representing and Consuming Otherness

There has reportedly been an increasing shift from concern with representation as an objectifying process that subordinates the Other to an investigation of the significance of representation in the formation of multiple negotiated subjectivities (Hallam and Street, 2000). However, it is my view that the former remains a central aspect in exploring issues of power that infuse discourses of 'race', culture and Otherness coupled with practices of representation and consumption. This is intrinsically related to the formation, perception and performance of identities. The housing of such discourses can be seen within the realm of popular culture and the mass media in particular as I shall discuss, with specific examples in Part Four, for now however, some contextual discussion is useful.

While the notion of the binary global Other constitutes a crucial part of media representations of 'race' and the exotic, complexities involved in the notion of Otherness such as those that have been discussed earlier are compounded when looking at media representations. For instance, it serves to gloss over the complexities and contradictions that form many

media representations and it is insufficient to state that the media are uniformly racist (Ferguson, 1998; Hall, 1981a). However, the crucial point that is highlighted through various studies (e.g. Hall, 1997;Malik, 2002) is that media representations do not simply mirror reality but actively construct it and in effect re-construct reality through signs and symbols that are used to convey a 'preferred meaning'. In this sense, media discourses serve an important role in engendering and reinforcing hegemonic ideologies that inturn impacts on the nature of social relations and positionings. The Parekh Report (2000) has highlighted the British media as a critical area in need of change with respect to its definitions of included and excluded groups.

As shall be discussed in more detail later in this thesis (see Chapter 3) within media debates there has been a move from the belief in overarching media power imposed on passive audiences (see Adorno and HorkHeimer, 1986) to an emphasis on the power of audiences to shape the meaning and use of the media (Ang, 1996). In line with this, attention has been paid to the agency of minority communities in constructing alternative media environments through specific patterns of production and consumption (see Cunningham and Sinclair, 2000). However, in my view the contradictions and restraints within which ethnic minority cultural producers in particular work needs to be highlighted in order to keep in mind unequal power relations within areas of production and consumption as these constitute fields that are already racialized. As a features writer for a 'British Asian' magazine told me:

"It involves a lot of juggling working on a magazine anyway because you are dependent on advertising for revenue so that limits your freedom as a writer or whatever because there are vested interests involved but then when you are a minority publication all these things get heightened..you are on the fringes in every way..like competing with popular mainstream glossies that monopolize the industry...it's not easy to get seen."

An emphasis on advertising revenue as crucial to a magazine's survival emerged as a universal concern amongst all the magazine staff I spoke to and has been noted elsewhere (see pg 20 in relation to Crane, 2000).

However, there are particular constraints linked to minority positionings and as I shall elaborate on later in this thesis, these may serve to limit the effectiveness of 'self representations' that results in a gap between the considerations of British Asian cultural producers and consumers (e.g. see pg 205).

Certainly my own research findings point to the potential of consumers to 'see through' and resist the preferred meaning of the messages that have been constructed (e.g. 'India as primitive' pg 165) albeit as they derive 'pleasure' from images (e.g. appreciation of aesthetic quality of image whose message is resisted, pg 169). Regarding forms of consumption, Bourdieu (1984) has argued that consumption is embedded within a system of signs and symbols that create and maintain distinctions and boundaries between groups. In this sense, taste and preferences depend on membership of social classes with emphasis on economic or cultural capital. While such an approach usefully brings together cultural and economic considerations through placing the cultural field as a marker and reinforcer of class distinctions, in my view this is a narrow idea of consumption. Issues of class did not have a significant bearing on this research study which is certainly not meant to indicate its unimportance, however perhaps more useful is to firstly, contextualize consuming practices where particular divisions or identity constructions may come to the fore. Secondly to also view the consumption of popular culture as a practice that may enable the crossing of specific boundaries into an identification with multiple cultural practices, albeit ambivalently. The idea of consumption as a means of establishing differences also emerges in Baudrillard's (1998) ideas. He states that all consumption is always in part the consumption of symbolic signs; consumption is a matter of cultural signs and the relations between signs. The latter is the means of establishing difference and difference from others is one of the main 'uses' of consumption.

The reinforcing of difference through paradoxically assuming difference can also be seen through consumption practices. Here difference or Otherness comes to be fixed onto the bodies of strangers or located in

certain cultural products where consumers are encouraged to 'add on' difference in a mode of 'temporality' to enhance the Self. 'Becoming different' works then as a means of getting closer to the Other in order to sustain a difference as opposed to defining itself against bodies of strangers (Ahmed, 2000). However, as I shall illustrate through latter parts of this thesis processes of cultural commodification serve to disassociate marketable products from bodies and origins marked 'undesirable' therefore within popular culture 'difference' increasingly comes to be fixed within free floating images and objects that are plucked from their roots (e.g. see pgs 166 -170).

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Summary

This chapter has highlighted the socially constructed and ambiguous character of normalised concepts and practices relating to 'race' and culture. However, this has been problematised by emphasising the continued naturality and fixity associated with these elements by youths interviewed for this study. This centres on an intrinsic relationship between 'race', skin colour and historically determined positionalities of superiority/inferiority (see Chapter 13 in particular). Within a context of racisms and racialized identities, challenge is offered to the unproblematic acceptance of 'new ethnicities' and ideas/practices of 'hybridity'. It has been argued that the latter needs to be located within more critical contexts that reinforce the normalization of whiteness and Otherness through the commodification of difference. The chapter has also emphasised the intrinsic relationship between Self and Other while drawing attention to possibilities for refiguring notions of absolute, fixed Otherness through the work of Levinas and the idea of British Asians as 'familiar strangers' (Ahmed, 2000). It is to a discussion of the socio-economic position of Asians in post war Britain that the next chapter focuses on in order to make tangible some of the theoretical discussion of this chapter, as well as providing a context for the subject matter about which this thesis is concerned with.

Chapter 2: Asians in Britain

"The first generation Asian immigrant in Britain...was not used to the mores and practices of an industrialised society. His presence was resented, and he suffered racialist insults and indignities. He was denied a decent house and a job commensurate with his abilities...the Asian immigrants are predictably frightened and bewildered"
(Bikhu Parekh, quoted in Fryer, 1984: 376).

Diversity Within

As indicated in the introductory discussion, overarching categories such as 'ethnic minorities' or the more specific 'Asian' or even 'South Asian' glosses over important differences relating to region; class; gender; culture; religion and within the latter, caste and sect differentiation that have impacted on producing different migration trajectories and enduring settlement experiences. In other words:

"..Asian experience now ranges all the way from Sylheti families in Spitalfields, East London, crowded together in decaying council tenements and faced by high levels of unemployment and racial harassment to wealthy East African Gujarati Hindus who have moved into comfortable suburban neighbourhoods where they are courted by senior members of the Conservative Party..." (Ballard, 1994: 28).

Other factors resulting in differential experiences relate to gender where it has been noted that women's responsibilities within Asian communities become pronounced and they are entrusted with the burden of carrying the family honour as well as cultural traditions (Bhopal, 1997). While family expectations relating to women and indeed youth in general are illustrated in the findings of the present study, what does come to the fore are the particular expectations relating to 'women of Asian origin' with regards to upholding 'Asian culture' (e.g. see pg 261).

Despite these varying experiences, the fact remains that the British 'host' society to which migrants from the Indian sub-continent came, did not

seek to recognize these internal differences, rather their treatment was and to a large extent continues to be in terms of a homogenous Asian grouping that may be characterized in terms of Otherness or at best 'familiar strangers'.

The Early Years

It has been estimated that in 1949 there were around 8,000 Indian and Pakistani settlers in Britain (Hiro, 1992). This compares with figures for 2001 which measure the UK ethnic minority population overall at 4.6 million: 7.9% of the total population. Indians form the largest minority group, constituting 2% of the population of England and Wales, followed by Pakistanis, those of Mixed ethnic backgrounds, Black Caribbean, Black Africans and Bangladeshis, while the remaining ethnic minority groups each account for less than 0.5% of the UK population (2001 Census/National Statistics Online).

The South Asian presence in Britain stretches back to the seventeenth century in the form of small numbers of sailors, domestics etc. This was followed in the mid-nineteenth century by princes, soldiers, doctors and students (The British Library online collections). After the introduction of the 1948 British Nationality Act, guaranteeing free right of entry and life-long residence and participation in British society to Commonwealth citizens by virtue of their relationship to the Empire, the numbers of South Asians arriving in Britain increased (Fryer, 1984). While peoples have migrated from various areas in the Indian sub-continent, approximately 95% of South Asian migrants came to Britain from the northern regions of Gujarat and Punjab in India, Mirpur in Pakistan, and Sylhet in Bangladesh, all of which had a history of sea trade. ('Moving On'/ Moving Here Website).

Post-War Britain: Doors Wide Open

Following the Second World War in 1945, reconstruction demanded labour which was fulfilled by Britain's colonial conquests in the form of cheap and plentiful sources of labour from the Caribbean and Asia (Cashmore and Troyna,1990 ; Sivanandan,1982). This post-war boom coincided with significant events in the Indian sub-continent, namely the partition of British India into India and Pakistan in 1947; the conflict between the two states regarding Kashmir and later the construction of the Mangla Dam in Pakistan. These all involved the mass movement and displacement of peoples, with the increased pressure on the land caused by high rural population densities, leading to impoverishment (Anwar, 1998 ; Hiro,1992). While this could be argued to have created 'push' factors for migration, simultaneously the buoyant British economy and the perceived opportunities for economic and social gain coupled with the tradition of overseas migration all acted as strong 'pull' factors to migrate (Robinson, 1986). However, challenges have been made to citing 'poverty' and the impact of the 1947 partition as causes of migration as both Punjab and Gujarat (where the majority of migrants came from) have been noted as prosperous States (Ballard, 1994 ; Sodhi, 1988). Rather, emphasis has been placed on the desire for increased social prestige, education and economic status as reasons for migration following British rule. This typically occurred within families who could afford travel for one family member and had some contacts already in Britain (Robinson, 1986).

Despite these different accentuations, economic factors (in terms of need or desire) emerge as paramount in the literature on South Asian migration. This is substantiated by Hiro (1992) who points to the comparatively low migration rates of Asians compared with West Indians during the mid fifties. He accounts for this in terms of differential historical relations where African slaves experienced a greater level of daily interaction with their British masters, creating some social and cultural affinity. Hiro contrasts this with the strategic aloofness employed by the British rulers in India, which engendered in the Indian mind an awe of the

'white man' and his country of origin. He argues that this meant that Asians did not view their migration in socio-cultural terms, like the West Indians did. This comparison between different migration trajectories is interesting and valid to an extent with the idea of a greater affinity between 'Afro-Caribbean culture' and 'English culture' continuing to have strategic uses in the application of different racial ideologies to different groups and in popular conceptions. As Black British novelist, Diran Adebayo states:

"We have integrated more, while Asians have been content to do their own 'invisible' thing...I have for a long time gained a sense from white people that we are liked more than Asians, no doubt because we are seen as being less 'alien'-most of us are Christian, Caribbeans have British names, our foods are less 'stinky' than theirs -though curries of course are popular" (Adebayo, 2001/ Web source).

Regarding the nature of migration, it has also been emphasized that initial migration was seen as a temporary state embarked on usually by young males, with a view to return once economic gains had been made. However, the majority did not return which may be explained for various reasons. For instance, the longer the duration of stay the more settled they became with experiences of alienation being eased through chain migration which resulted in greater kinship networks originating from the homeland. Further, settlement that was not planned from the outset became cemented with the later migration of wives and children (Ballard,1994). Regarding the last point, Gifford (1990) points to Asian women not only as migrating dependents of males as is popularly known but also as individuals in their own right who had come to England for instance, for education.

Finally, it is important to note that in addition to the 'voluntary' migration of peoples, some institutional arrangements encouraged the migration process. For instance in India and Pakistan, British textile companies advertised for workers and some were directly recruited which resulted in the chain migration of Indians, Pakistanis and later Bangladeshis from the

same areas (Anwar, 1998). The same has been noted in terms of West Indians who were recruited for the transport and health industries via advertisements in Barbados, Trinidad etc (Fryer, 1984).

The above discussion of migration needs to be placed within a context that recognises migrant labour as a highly differentiated category in Britain and that in the post war period several different groups of migrants came to the UK during different immigration waves, displaying heterogeneity between and within groups (Parekh, 1997), a glimpse of which has been given. However because of the 'visibility' of groups originating from the Caribbean and New Commonwealth, the post-war period has been one in which 'immigrant' has come to be equated with 'Black' and immigration has since become a code word for 'race' issues. However, the majority of immigrants to Britain have been white European groups (Anthias, 1992). Contemporary situations involving the EU movement of workers and refugees from European countries serves to put the spotlight on 'white immigration' that as emphasised earlier reflects alternative racialization processes in terms of a Xeno-racism (see pg 34).

Places of Settlement

Most of the earlier immigrants of the 1950s settled in the South East, in London and the nearby counties, a pattern that was followed by those arriving during the 1960s, whom in addition went to the Midlands and the North West textile region. It has been suggested that the pattern of Asian settlement took place in areas where white labour was scarce because of the rapid pace of economic expansion, for example Greater London and Birmingham (Jones, 1978). In addition, settlement also occurred in those areas where there was a labour shortage in certain industries because of the poor conditions of employment, for instance, the textile industries of Manchester and Leeds. Within the broad category of South Asian, it has been noted that Indians tend to be more concentrated in the South East and Midlands regions; Bangladeshis are mainly concentrated in Greater London while Pakistanis are present in greater number in the West

Midlands, Yorkshire, the North West and Scotland as a result of differential migration. This subsequently impacts differentially on the employment and educational opportunities of Asian youth (Anwar, 1998).

The exclusions and pressures that ethnic minorities in general have been subjected to in relation to housing in Britain have been well documented in various studies over the years (Brown, 1984; Daniel, 1968). The main findings have been that due to racism, the post-war New Commonwealth immigrants who arrived in Britain (without the State assistance that was provided for other immigrant groups, e.g. The Polish Resettlement Programme, Cashmore and Troyna, 1990) were unable to obtain council housing and coerced into purchasing expensive property in poor condition situated in the deprived areas of big cities. Such institutional inequalities coupled with the subjective racism of individuals (e.g. landlords, estate agents) have had a significant influence on racial inequalities (Mehta, 1986).

While the trend for owner occupancy has continued amongst South Asians, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis are the most likely to be disadvantaged. For instance, they are the two groups on the lowest incomes or unemployed; more likely to live in overcrowded terraced housing and the most likely to be without basic amenities (Anwar, 1998). Further, a report by the Greater London Authority found that 73% of Pakistani and Bangladeshi children in London are living in income poverty (GLA, 2002). In addition, Bangladeshis in particular are likely to constitute the minority of South Asians that live on council estates and it was here for example in Tower Hamlets, during the eighties that there was an increase in violent racial harassment (Ramdin,1999) .

Migration Restrictions: Doors Slammed Shut

While the period of economic expansion lasted, the State approved of ready made non-white labour, however during the mid-fifties recession the demand for labour receded. This brought the political and social

consequences of the previously unregulated influx of immigrants to the forefront of political discourse. The scale and pattern of immigration rapidly increased in the run up to the 1962 Immigration Act which sought to restrict New Commonwealth immigration. In opting for immigration control it has been argued that the British State institutionalised popular racism (Sivanandan, 1982). This is reflected in the 1968 Commonwealth Immigrants Act, passed as a response to the 'Africanisation' of policies in East Africa which resulted in the expulsion of East African Asians. The 1968 Act was designed to prevent these refugees taking residence in Britain, despite the majority being highly skilled and holding British passports. Significantly a "special clause in the Act gave ex-colonials with white skins the continued right of free entry" (Fryer, 1984). With each Immigration Act (1962/68/71) and restrictive legislation such as the 1981 Nationality Act, the entry of black immigrants has been increasingly controlled and effectively stopped. However it should be noted that since the 'closing of the gates' undocumented migration of European asylum seekers as well as 'third world' workers has occurred in Britain with "refugees from poor nations reportedly constituting 80% of illegal immigrants to Britain" (Sereny, 2001) as highlighted earlier (pg 34). It should also be mentioned that within a post September 11 context, the introduction of Anti Terrorism Legislation (2000/05) in Britain has increased the spotlight on those 'extremist' individuals/groups residing in Britain that may be played out along racialized religious lines.

Returning to the sixties, exclusionary legislation ran parallel to the government's programme for integration and multiculturalism under the umbrella of cultural diversity and tolerance, which saw the passing of two Race Relations Acts (1965;1976) designed to tackle racial discrimination. Therefore what can be seen as institutionalised forms of racial exclusion went hand in hand with policies for 'managing' and incorporating the minority ethnic population in Britain, which was contextualized by increasingly volatile race relations where Black immigrants in general were constructed as 'a problem'. This is reflected through various

developments since the sixties. For instance, in 1964, Conservative candidate for Smethwick in the West Midlands, Peter Griffiths defeated the labour candidate on the basis of a racist, anti-immigration campaign. Further, there were Enoch Powell's articles and speeches against non-white immigration, where he emphasised Englishness and advocated repatriation of immigrants, culminating in his infamous 'rivers of blood' speech in 1968. These events spurred the formation of anti-immigrant organisations, most famously the National Front founded in 1966 (Hiro,1992 ; Ramdin,1999). The election of Thatcher as Prime Minister in 1979 diminished the power of the National Front through legitimising their extremities by refusing to allow immigrants to 'swamp the great British character' (Barker, 1981). However, the ensuing splinter groups that have resulted from the demise of the National Front (most notably, the BNP) have continued their activities. For instance, in 1993 there was the victory of a BNP candidate in a local council by-election in Millwall, Tower Hamlets, followed in 2001, with the BNP gaining more than 11,000 votes in Oldham during the General Election (The Observer/Race in Britain-special edition 2001). 'Less civilized' methods have included the fatal Nail bomb attacks (1999) in parts of London characterised by high Afro-Caribbean, South Asian and gay populations.

The eighties saw inner city riots in Toxteth, Bristol and Brixton. Regarding the latter, what was essentially a youth uprising against police authority was politically and publicly presented as the criminality of Afro-Caribbean youth, which led to a shift in focus from the problems of external immigration to the threatening 'black alien wedge' within. This focus has sustained with the more recent disturbances between Asian youth and the Police in Bradford and Oldham (2001) that have highlighted Muslim male youths as a particular problem, with media reports of highly segregated areas, Asian privileges and whites as victims (see White, 2002). As a point of contrast, Westwood (1995) in her study argues that the forces of racism result in racial attacks and South Asian men being subject to routine harassment by the police which contributes to a sense of separateness and safety only 'in their own space.' It is important to

highlight the strengthening of these racializing forces since September 11 2001 and more specifically in relation to Britain since the London Bombings in July 2005. During this time, media reports have gone from uncovering Islamic terrorist training camps in areas with a notable Asian presence to in-depth profiles of the British Muslim 'suicide bombers' to frenzied coverage of police manhunts for the British Muslims who attempted later attacks. This has been coupled with media appearances of followers of Islam having to repeatedly insist on the 'peacefulness' of their religion and allegiance to Britain in order to distance themselves from the "Ideology of Evil" with which Islam has become equated in the popular mind (under this spotlight, perhaps Tebbit's infamous 'cricket test' of West Indian, Pakistani and Indian, although notably, not Australian or New Zealand, minority loyalty to Britain isn't so objectionable). This has been compounded by increasing divisions within Asian groups, with non-Muslims keen to escape negative associations that inevitably results from such a focus (The Great British Asian Invasion, Channel 4/ 7.10.04). In addition, fuel is given to pre-existing tensions, influenced by historical relations in the sub-continent, for example between Hindus and Muslims. As one of my interviewees in the context of September 11 told me:

"....it's like divide and rule all over again, you know...really terrible things have happened all around the world but something terrible happened in America and it was despicable but it's also the case that it's used to target certain groups that no-one likes anyway...Muslims become the easy fall guys for everyone.....then you get Indians saying.. 'oh these Muslims have always been crazy...look at the partition, look at Kashmir'....that makes me really sad" (Anil, 26yrs, self identifies as Asian).

Fighting Spirits

Experiences of racism have consistently been countered with various organisations down the years such as the Indian Workers Association (1956) and Pakistani Workers Association (1961) plus multi-ethnic organisations such as CARD (Campaign Against Racial Discrimination)

set up in 1964 in order to influence government and the media, as well as the setting up of the Anti-Nazi League in the mid-seventies as a response to overtly racist movements.

In the eighties, following experiences of racism and marginality from mainstream trade unions, the Black Trade Unionists Solidarity Movement for blacks and Asians was set up (Ramdin, 1999). What is significant is the militancy amongst Asian workers in Britain that was reflected in a series of factory disputes against management over pay and conditions. For instance: Woolf's in Southall (1963); Courtalds Red Scar Mill in Preston (1965) and perhaps most famously, Grunwick (1978) where a two year strike was waged against the poor conditions and aggressive management of the processing factory. Grunwick is of particular interest because firstly, the dispute was waged by Asian employees against an Anglo-Indian employer therefore making complex the issue of 'race' through the lens of class conflict. Secondly, the strikers were mainly composed of East African Indian women hence challenging popular orientalist stereotypes of the 'passive' Asian woman. More recently, there has been the Organisation of Women of African and Asian Descent and the Southall Black Sisters, who have campaigned on issues such as virginity tests, domestic violence etc. In addition there have been numerous other grassroots organisations such as the Newham Monitoring Project and the Federation of Bangladeshi Youth Organisations (Ramdin,1999; Visram, 1993).

On a different level, with the growth of media technologies in a globalised world, various mediums such as television channels, magazines/newspapers and internet sites have developed within the 'Asian communities' providing a space for alternative knowledges, self narrations and support. For instance, more than ten Indian language programmes can be received via satellite that includes a wide range of programming from music, drama and film to news, sport and documentary. As I shall illustrate through the latter parts of this thesis while arenas of self-representation do not come without limitations (e.g.

see pg 248) their very existence can play a significant role in self empowerment and self worth. As one of my interviewees, *Raveena* says:

"It's good that we have Indian films, music and places to go to that celebrate that because it's an important part of who we are and these avenues encourage us to be proud of who we are and that's important because that's what you pass down" (Raveena,female,30yrs, marketing manager, self identifies as Asian Sikh).

Youth Identities and Racialized Experiences

A consistent theme of various studies has been the security of identity amongst South Asian first generation migrants compared with the insecurity and confusion of later generations, in terms of a clashing of cultures or having the best and/or worst of two worlds (Ghuman,1993 ; Khan,1979). More recently, researchers have argued that young Asians are synthesising British cultural values with traditional values and are developing new cultural patterns (Stopes-Roe and Cochrane,1990 ; Anwar, 1998) visible in musical fusions, for instance. This is seen to constitute a dynamic and enabling space characteristic of 'cultures of hybridity' or 'new ethnicities', of which a detailed critical discussion has been provided in Chapter 1 (pgs 39-43).

Stopes-Roe and Cochrane (1990) from findings of their study of English and Asian families argue that popular notions of cultural conflict between first and later Asian generations has been overplayed as they found similar 'clashes' amongst generations within English families, on issues such as freedom and the weakening of family bonds. This is substantiated by findings from the present study and in addition, instances of cultural confusion are particularly prevalent amongst the young 'white women' I spoke to, that arises in their use of Othered cultural products (e.g. see pg 258).

Stopes-Roe and Cochrane also argue that Asian youth perceive less prejudice and were more frequently optimistic than were their parents about the future of young Asians and were also more optimistic than the young English about their own future. However, this is in contrast to research conducted by Anwar (1998) who found pessimism to be common amongst Asian youth regarding future prospects, especially in terms of improved race relations and employment prospects, owing to a perception of discrimination within and outside the education system. This is certainly a common theme that emerged from the narratives of 'youth of Asian origin' that I collected, for instance as *Shalini* says:

"..like schools, uni, work....everywhere...people who aren't white have to put up with a lot....it's not fair because whether we came to this country or was born here it doesn't matter...we put in to this country, our parents worked hard and we deserve to be treated equally" (Shalini,20, female, student, self identifies as Indian).

Regarding ethnic minority experiences of British education, developments have included State policies designed to enforce assimilation in the 1960s, such as 'bussing' black and Asian students to various schools in order to prevent a high concentration in any particular school. This can be juxtaposed against the more recent introduction of mother tongue teaching in areas of high Bangladeshi concentration such as Tower Hamlets, to the grass-roots campaign for state funding of separate religious schooling in the eighties, most notably for Muslim schools. The Parekh Report by the Runnymede Trust (2000) highlights the above national average achievement of Indian pupils in schools contrasted with the below national average of Bangladeshi and Pakistani pupils, which can be linked to the disadvantaged life chances of these groups as indicated in the discussion on housing earlier. Further, research of entry into higher education has revealed the existence of institutional racism in Britain's older universities that disproportionately affects Indians, Pakistanis, black Africans and Irish (see McVeigh, 2002). A substantial body of research points to the fact that UK born Asian youth despite their British education face racial discrimination in all walks of life. For

instance, while most ethnic groups are over-represented among Britain's undergraduates, similar or better levels of education for almost all ethnic minority groups has not translated into equality in employment. Rather, there is evidence of higher graduate unemployment and lower wages than for similarly qualified whites plus the prevailing whiteness of the political, legal and business establishments point to the continued force of institutional racism (Katwala, 2001; Modood et al, 1997).

Employment

Following the Second World War, institutional racism ensured that the majority of immigrants came to occupy the lowest paid/skilled jobs that were concentrated in the communications, transport and manufacturing industries. Although the majority of immigrants came from rural backgrounds, those who had professional qualifications commonly experienced occupational downgrading (Chandau, 1986). Further, the recession in manufacturing in the 1970s and 1980s disproportionately hit ethnic minorities and Asians were forced to diversify into the service sector or set up small businesses, the amount of which particularly increased during the self-employment boom of the eighties (Moving Here Website). Evidence suggests that while there have been some changes in the employment patterns of ethnic minorities, inequalities and discrimination prevail (Skellington and Morris, 1994). In addition, overall they remain over-represented on the unemployed register plus a disproportionately large number still occupy low paid and low skilled jobs (Bhat et al,1988) where they may also be concentrated in declining sectors, for example Pakistani and Bangladeshis in the clothing and textile sectors (Walker, 2002).

More specifically however, by the early nineties, there was evidence that the position of Indians and African Asians in terms of division of their employment in manual and non-manual was similar to white men; however two thirds of Caribbeans, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis occupied manual positions (Ramdin,1999). More recently, a Government report

serves to highlight the negative perception of Islam on employment opportunities as Muslim men of Pakistani and Bangladeshi background are disproportionately unemployed relative to other Asians. Pakistani Muslims are claimed to be three times more likely to be jobless than Hindus and Indian Muslims are twice as likely to be unemployed than Indian Hindus (see Walker, 2002). This can be substantiated by a TUC report (2005) that points to Pakistani and Bangladeshi men earning £150 less per week than white men. While the gap is less between women, these same groups are highlighted as earning less than white women. This masks the existence of different labour markets such as the internal home market and the 'ethnic economy', where Bangladeshi women, recruited as family labour are more likely to participate (Bhopal,1997 ; Westwood and Bhachu, 1988).

With regards to self-employment, South Asian self-employment rates are seen to be greater than the general population, for example 25% of Pakistani men are self-employed compared with 11% of white men (Walker, 2002). More specifically, in London it has been estimated that there are 15,000 Asian businesses employing over 200,000 people (Centre for Social Markets Conference, 2003). Despite the well documented fortunes of Asian business owners as well as instances of younger generations breaking out of ethnic niche markets (into, for example, creative industries) it is in the small business sector (particularly the areas of wholesale and retail) where much South Asian self employment is contained and that has been predicted will remain marginally profitable (Chandau,1986). Moreover these sectors remain most vulnerable to unsociable hours and are increasingly dependent on the unpaid labour of family members, most notably wives and children (see Anthias and Mehta, 2003) or closure owing to the extended opening hours of Supermarket chains. Where Asian women own their businesses, these rates are lower than the average with them owning 16% of Asian owned businesses compared with 25% for black and 23% for white women (GLA, 2005).

In addition, the essentialising basis of culturalist assumptions that certain communities (e.g. South Asians) are predisposed to entrepreneurship can be challenged by the different experiences and circumstances related to the business entry of Asians (e.g. those who were forced to become self-employed upon the collapse of industries). It also glosses over experiences of discrimination within the mainstream labour market that may have resulted in self employment, as *Akshay*, one of my interviewees, explains:

"...it's frustrating that after all the education and training I went through to become an accountant, there were no opportunities in my case to go anywhere in the firm....people who had been there for a lot less time than me were getting promoted all the time and all of them were white...there wasn't much choice but to branch out, it hasn't been easy but it's the only way" (Akshay, 30yrs, self employed accountant, identifies as Asian).

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Summary

This chapter has illustrated the socio-economic position of Asians who came to post war Britain in the face of institutional and popular racisms and the ways in which these were challenged through organised movements. While diversity amongst South Asian groups is highlighted (e.g. in terms of age, ethnicity and gender) it is the continuing existence of exclusion and racisms in various areas of British society and the ensuing disillusionment of 'Asian youth' that emerge as the salient points. This provides an important background within which later chapters on media representations of Asianness and youth lived realities and dynamics may be viewed.

PART TWO
Theoretical & Cultural Encounters

In this section, I shall focus on the issue of cultural representations within a theoretical and historical context. I begin with a discussion of various theoretical approaches towards popular culture and the media in particular which forms a crucial means of the representation and racialization of identities. Having assessed the strengths and limitations of these theories in relation to the present study, I move on to a critical engagement with Said's Orientalism (1978) which constitutes the primary approach of this thesis. Here, I discuss its main themes and critiques followed by how I have made use of and extended the remit of Orientalism (1978) for my research. The section concludes with illustrations of orientalism and challenges to orientalism within the historical context of the British Raj.

Chapter 3: Cultural Theories

Before entering into a discussion of cultural theories, some points of clarification should be made. Although I discuss various theories separately and certainly theoretical schools are often presented in mutually exclusive terms, it is apparent that there is substantial exchange and intersection involved as well as important ideas emerging from different approaches that makes the championing of any particular 'theoretical camp' far from the aims of this chapter. Rather, my purpose is to illustrate a selection of the wide variety of theories and critically engage with different positions, drawing out those salient ideas for my study on cultural representations within the media. I shall begin with a discussion of Marxist approaches.

Marxisms

Marx's materialist theory focuses on the economy (base) as determining the nature of society (superstructure) and relations between the owners of production and the passive subordinate workers. The necessary conflict that this dynamic is based on provides the means for workers to be able to rise up against capitalism. Although this is a simplified account, for this study the crucial point emerging from Marxism is that a ruling set of ideas seen as *ideologies* are employed by the owners of production to maintain the capitalist system. These are disseminated through institutions such as schools and churches and in terms of contemporary society, the mass media (Murdock and Golding,1977) and consumerism (Marcuse,1964). These ideologies are argued to distort reality through a set of false representations that maintain a 'false consciousness' and unequal relations. There are important limitations to this idea that most immediately involve economic determinism where all experiences are reduced to the economy and class. Further, while traditional Marxism has a history of anti-imperialist thought, its economic bias has meant a concentration on imperialism as aligned with global capitalism rather than

also focusing on imperialism as an exploitative relationship between the West and its Others (Gandhi, 1998). Contemporary Marxisms have built on these basic ideas where the concept of ideology remains crucial while attempting to move away from a concentration on the economic towards the cultural sphere. It is to a discussion of these theories in terms of The Frankfurt School followed by Antonio Gramsci that I now turn.

The work of the Frankfurt school highlights the fetishization of commodities that leads to 'false needs' being promoted by the operations of a 'culture industry' that is linked to modern capitalism through which the working class are pacified into accepting capitalist relations (Strinati, 2004). The culture industry (i.e. media, advertising, music etc) is argued to shape tastes and preferences of the masses through a corrupting and manipulative ideology that promotes conformity, standardisation and homogeneity (Adorno, 1991) therefore challenging the existence of a 'popular' culture (as mentioned in Chapter 1). In my view these ideas continue to hold resonance particularly in terms of cultural commodification processes which I shall discuss further in Chapter 9. However, as with traditional Marxism, economic relations assume centre stage as well as attributing passivity to the working classes.

As counter balance to the ideas of Adorno and perhaps an early nod to approaches that emphasise the subversive nature of popular culture (e.g. Fiske, 1987) Walter Benjamin asserts the democratic and participatory potential of contemporary popular culture. What is particularly highlighted is the benefits of technological advance in making conventionally regarded 'high culture' more accessible to the masses, as in art for example (Benjamin, 1969).

The ideas of Italian Marxist, Gramsci (1971) link questions of culture, power and ideology in the view that ruling groups are able to maintain their power through the socialization of people into current social arrangements that are disseminated in schools, media etc. This reproduces 'hegemonic' ways of thinking that operate at the level of

common sense knowledge and are therefore shielded from being questioned. For instance, one of the principal underpinnings of racist ideology is the belief (or to use Barthes' notion of 'myth', discussed in Chapter 7) that one 'race' is naturally superior to others and therefore has an unquestioned right to dominance. However, perhaps the uniqueness of Gramsci's notion of hegemony lies in the view that this is a relational state that is always in process and in need of reinforcement as not everyone will necessarily accept the hegemonic world view. At the same time powerful forces such as the media maintain their position by diluting potential threats through inclusion of radical/alternative views/styles etc into the ideological centre. In contrast to other Marxist theories, Gramsci emphasises the contradictory and negotiated existence of ideology and cultural institutions. These processes are reflected through the operations and consumption of commodity culture as illustrated in Part Four of this thesis.

Although Gramsci's ideas move away from an overt focus on class, it is still based on economic determinism as his notion of hegemony is not just about how the dominant order practice government but also what the working class need to achieve through class struggle and conflict (see Strinati, 2004). However, the idea of hegemony is apparent in Said's Orientalism (1978) and has been adapted to a variety of disciplines, most notably that of Cultural Studies, which I shall now discuss.

Cultural Studies

The Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) has focused on issues of 'race' and identity in terms of political and cultural ideologies, media representations and multiple identities within a frame drawn from theorists such as Gramsci, Althusser and Barthes (see Hall et al, 1978). Within this context, culturalist approaches have aimed to move beyond a perception of ideology as a distortion of reality towards looking at how discursive processes, such as language and images (which form an integral part of the present study) seek to construct reality through

encoding texts with a preferred meaning. For instance, studies during the seventies/eighties highlighted the media's role in engendering a 'moral panic' around issues of race that served to criminalize black people, labelling them as 'muggers' etc. This paved the way for a new form of state 'authoritarian populism' in a context of political dissent. In such a way the media are involved in 'the politics of signification' where they actively engage in 'making things mean' (Hall et al, 1978; Hall, 1997).

In addition however, there has been a focus on the existence of multiple and negotiated identities that highlights varying responses to cultural texts by active and heterogeneous audiences within a Gramscian frame, reflected in Hall's model of media production and reception. This encoding/decoding model has been influential in analysing media practices and is made use of in the present study (see Chapter 8). However, the emphasis on active audiences has been challenged in terms of overestimating the existence of progressive readings as well as assuming active reception means political activity (see Kleinhans, 1994). Coupled with these concerns, recent studies point to audiences still believing in the power of the media, whose messages are accepted uncritically by most of their recipients (Ross, 2000) an issue that also arises in the present study (see Chapters 10 -12). In addition, there has been a tendency within audience reception studies to work within a static view of ethnicity thus reproducing racial stereotypes (Harindranath, 2000).

Structuralism

Structuralism can be identified as a scientific based framework that emphasises the universal, causal character of structures. Individual parts of the structure gain meaning in conjunction with other elements within a structural system that exists independently of history and culture. Structures may be tangible or abstract, the important point being that individual thought is restricted within such structures (Hawkes, 2003; Sturrock, 2003). As such, Structuralism goes against Cartesian notions of

the Renaissance man as free, independent and self-contained by eliminating agency and in effect 'dissolving man' (Gandhi, 1998).

Within this view, popular culture constitutes a structure and has been identified as a form of ideological machine that reproduces the dominant ideology. This is exemplified by Barthes' classic study on Mythologies (1973) that through the application of semiotics (study of signs) reviews various areas of popular culture, including visual images. This is an important study for my thesis which I discuss in detail later (pg 125) within a critical context of structural semiotics in general. While attention to the insights of structuralism is important and certainly a more poststructuralist conception of semiotics has been used for this study, there are significant limitations that restrict its usefulness. This is largely due to the centrality given to the rules and codes of structural systems at the expense of exploring human subjects and the dynamics that locate visual discourses and allow them to produce meaning (Allen, 2003; Mcrobbie,1994). A system-oriented focus becomes restrictive when studying the fluid and subjective nature of culture hence out of post structural ideas have developed more reflexive analytical tools such as social semiotics and discourse analysis. These seek to look beyond the image and text within a closed system and instead in conjunction with social practices and complex relations of production and interpretation, which is where the present study is located.

Feminisms

Despite different emphasis and experiences within feminism that hinge on issues of 'race', ethnicity, class, sexuality etc it is acknowledged that inequalities in gender power relations are socially, culturally and ideologically constructed. Developments in feminist theory have also engendered notions of the Other coded as female and constructed in the context of hierarchical relations of power and the constitution of men as subjects (Hallam and Street, 2000). This serves to problematise notions of a singular Other, expressed, for instance, solely in racial terms and is an important consideration and mode of particularity in the present study,

as illustrated at various points through discussions of women's roles and experiences (e.g. see pg 265).

Feminist critiques of media and popular cultural representations of women have highlighted exploitative, stereotypical images; the invisibility of women in areas of cultural production and under representation as studied audiences (Strinati, 2004). In looking at the ideological role of the media in reinforcing patriarchy, emphasis has been on frameworks such as Marxism and Structuralism. In addition, psychoanalytic theories have been influential in feminist approaches to gender representations in the media that have, for instance, focused on the 'male gaze' in film and art where women are seen to be objectified and rendered passive (see Mulvey,1975). The main difficulty with these theories is that all instances become reduced to class, structures and/or gender respectively thus ignoring important variables such as 'race' and ethnicity.

With this in mind and as a challenge to Western feminism in general, Black feminism (itself a divergent and heterogeneous category) has pointed to the masculinist bias within Black Nationalist politics and Eurocentric inadequacies within Western feminism. These have concentrated on issues such as 'patriarchy' and 'the family' as a site of women's oppression, at the expense of examining different experiences and contexts that a white middle class agenda doesn't address (Carby,1982; hooks,1981). For instance, 'the family' has been highlighted as a site of support for many black and Asian women (see Sivanandan, 1982). Overall these earlier challenges and developments have moved feminist practices away from a universal 'sisterhood' approach based on essentialist claims about the nature of women towards a unity based on strategic political goals and intersectionality, highlighting a multiple voiced and located subject. From a platform of 'differences within', feminism has incorporated postmodern notions of identity as discursive and performative, illustrated in particular in queer theories and the work of Judith Butler. Here it is claimed that identities come into being through their enactment and through gender ideologies as opposed to already

existing in an essential and uniform state (Butler, 1990). This focus seeks to challenge the hegemony which banishes certain bodies to the realm of matter/nature (Ahmed,1998).

Postmodernism

As has been highlighted in the introductory discussion, the postmodern era has been characterised by high consumption, influenced by an overwhelming emphasis on image within popular culture. Within a Marxist frame, Jameson has spoken of the world of the visual image, where culture is dominant, as the product of a post-industrial capitalism. This is reflected in the proliferation of old and recycled products that can be reintegrated into the image-based world for consumption. This is claimed to signify a death of imagination, death of politics and death of the social which is linked to increasingly fragmented identities (Jameson, 1991). This has been challenged by McRobbie (1994) who sees the second hand 'plundering of culture', especially by youth groups, as providing them with the space to permeate an adult social order with their youth identities. As pointed out in Chapter 1 with regards to claims of the existence of a 'convivial culture' (Gilroy, 2004) within urban youth, there is a tendency to see youth groups as necessarily aligned by virtue of their youth status. However, as I shall describe (through Parts Four and Five) historically constituted power relations together with racialized regimes of representation act as obstacles to the development of alliances rooted in seemingly universal spaces of experience, such as age group.

Significantly, postmodernist ideas have exposed the foundations of social theory by pointing to the decline of grand narratives (e.g. the Enlightenment) that as homogenizing discursive practices excluded other discourses in the name of universalism and reason. This collapse of the discourses of modernity has arguably allowed the emergence of a plurality of voices from the margins with an insistence on difference and cultural diversity as a challenge to absolute truth (Lyotard, 1984). This coupled with the increasing fragmentation of identities amidst economic globalisation and consumerism has displaced the role of traditional

institutions such as, religion, for individualized identities (Storey, 2001). However, in my view challenges to these ideas can be seen in the renewed force of religion, for example, with regards to the increasing politicization of Islam. This is particularly apparent in a post September 11 context and the representation of Islam not just as a counter to, but as a threat to the West. This serves to question claims of a disintegration of exclusionary discourses and the basis on which 'plural voices' come to be heard. As such, Postmodernism has been viewed in negative terms of domination through appropriating the history and cultural practices of the non-West. This is reflected through consumer culture (Sardar, 1998) and discouraging social intervention through the uncensored play of differences (Savigliano, 1995).

Postcolonialism

The challenge to the grand narratives of history coincided with the emergence of the post colonial critic who focused on the experience of the colonial/postcolonial subject that had been neglected within the Marxist class analysis of history (McRobbie, 1994). Discourses of post colonialism have served to undermine traditional narratives of nation and national/ethnic identity and like postmodernism, have challenged the foundations of modernity coupled with global processes and the expansion of media technologies (Gabriel,1998).

As a challenge to hegemonic views of culturally homogenous national identities, postcolonialism has emphasized experiences and negotiated identities based on 'diaspora' and 'hybridity' (the central features of which have been discussed in Chapter 1). The approach emphasises analysing nations and cultures in their interdependence, especially in relation to their history of colonialism that is historically allied with racism. However, postcolonial theories have provoked criticisms that involve usage of the term, 'post-colonial' which is seen to incorrectly imply that the era of Western domination and exploitation of non-Western countries has ended (see Moore-Gilbert, 1997). Further, the term has been identified as problematic for its centring of colonialism as a marker of historical

difference therefore reinforcing the centrality of European instigated events in global history (McClintock, 1994). While the latter in particular is a valid point, colonial practices and relations have been pivotal in disseminating Eurocentric world views. These have engendered unequal racialized power structures and relations that continue to be pervasive in contemporary global society. This is highlighted through the narratives of the 'youth of Asian origin' in particular, as I shall illustrate later in this thesis (e.g. see pg 227). Nevertheless it is acknowledged that postcolonial theory occupies a contradictory position through its entrenchment in Western academic institutions and the normative placing of Western epistemology as central. This coupled with glossing over historical specificity and national/local projects of liberation as well as a lack of engagement with, for instance, Indian and African knowledge systems can serve hegemonic interests (Gandhi,1998 ; Sanjuan,1998).

However, what is of particular interest to my study is the focus on the role of ideologies and racialization processes during the colonial period that have impacted (although not necessarily in replica) on contemporary realities and understandings where images of 'the Other' have been constructed and acted upon. What is highlighted is the centre's authority based on an 'invisibility' of the dominant culture hence it is assumed to be the universal norm. This is in stark contrast to the visibility of 'the Other' based on stereotype and skin colour etc. In this sense, the dominant culture doesn't merely oppress a marginalized society, but actually reinvents or re-presents it for its own purposes. This process can be seen in the media construction of Asianness where 'Asian culture' is to a large extent constructed for Western consumption (as shall be illustrated in Part Four). While the historical construction of the binary Western Self and Eastern Other emerges as a central dynamic on various levels of the present study, there may be specific instances where hegemonic attributions of Otherness can be questioned. Through personal challenges and interactions, 'the Other' conceptualized as a fixed category occupied through negative essentialist notions may be challenged (as I shall reflect on in the concluding discussion, pg 292).

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Summary

In this chapter I have attempted to draw out the main themes of various cultural theories and assess their relevance to the present study, of which a number of key points can be highlighted, which are as follows: Firstly, within Marxist and Structuralist approaches, of particular significance is the dissemination of dominant ideologies within cultural practices that are rooted in materiality. This has been taken up in my study through attention to the nature of cultural commodification in popular culture (see Part Four). However, the collapse of culture into economics/systems coupled with the passivity attributed to the cultural consumer is considered insufficient. These limitations are addressed by Cultural and Feminist approaches in highlighting diversity of experiences both within media representations and responses to them. This has been taken up in my study through analysis of 'mainstream' and 'minority' representations coupled with gathering contextualized individual responses, across gender and ethnicity. This emphasis also emerges within Postmodernism, where the attention also given to visual culture is particularly important for the present study. However, postmodernist challenges to grand narratives and the fragmentation of identities are not considered to have resulted in more egalitarian societies. Rather, it is my view that through processes of consumption, differences are reinforced as I shall illustrate in Parts Four and Five of this thesis. Postcolonialism, while also challenging meta-narratives enables a more contextual approach to visual culture through locating culture and power historically, in colonial and postcolonial contexts. This is despite the contradiction that emerges from the positioning of Postcolonialism within primarily Western academies. I shall now move on to discuss what is widely regarded as the catalyst for Postcolonialism (Gandhi, 1998) and through the centrality given to historically and materially located cultural representations, constitutes the central reference point for my study, namely: *Said's Orientalism*. A critical discussion of its main elements constitutes the focus of the next chapter.

Chapter 4: Orientalism

"...without examining Orientalism as a discourse one cannot possibly understand the enormously systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage-and even produce-the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period" (Said, 1978: 3).

Defining Orientalism

Said defines orientalism as Western thought and practice that centres on Western superiority and Eastern / Oriental inferiority, which has enabled and continues to enable Western structural domination and authority over the Orient (i.e. colonialism/neo colonialism). Invocations of East and West draw on a field that is always already racialized (Kondo, 1997) and orientalism as a hegemonic discursive practice needs to be seen as a form of racist discourse that serves to essentialize peoples and cultures, with a view to unequal outcomes (see pg 33). The 'constructed representations' of places, peoples and cultures by the powerful white West, that have become hegemonic constitutes a central theme of Orientalism (1978). Said illustrates, through colonial literary and political pieces, how this ideology is crucially underpinned by 'language' that consistently constructs the 'weak or irrational Orient' as needing the dominance of the West. The critical role of language in constructing Otherness has been highlighted elsewhere, for instance the association of 'blackness with evil and sin' through language during the French colonisation of Algeria (Fanon,1963;1967). More recently, Thiongo (1986) has highlighted the ways in which the language of African literature manifests the dominance of Empire and urges African writers to write in traditional African languages as opposed to European languages. The role of 'language' (which may be identified as oral, written or visual in the form of images etc) in constructing 'truths' and identities constitutes an important aspect of this study and is focused upon later in this thesis (see Part Four). The issue of language and its intrinsic relation to knowledge and power in the form of discourse forms an integral part of Said's text, as described overleaf.

Knowledge and Power

Said's Orientalism relies heavily on Foucault's notion of discourse as power through knowledge (see Chapter 7) the important point being that a power relation is produced between those who posses knowledge and those who do not. Therefore, Westerners accumulated 'knowledge' of the Orient enabled a relationship of power, domination and complex hegemony to be played out which facilitated imperial conquest. Orientalism constitutes a discourse when it systematically begins to produce stereotypes about Orientals and the Orient, such as the 'child-like native', 'the mystical East' (Gandhi,1998). In this way, the Orient and the Oriental become homogenized and fixed into 'the passive object' with the gaze of the West, as 'the active subject', upon it. The important role of orientalist discursive knowledge in the form of media representations and youth perceptions of Othered peoples and cultures shall be illustrated in the latter parts of this thesis (see Chapters 9 -12). I shall also reflect on the possibility of challenging hegemonic knowledges through the countering use of language and knowledge (see Concluding Discussion, pgs 288-290).

Self-Orientalism

"Orientalist notions influenced the people who were called Orientals as well as those called Occidental, European or Western" (Said, 1978: 42)

Although Said provides some discussion on the influence of orientalism on Orientals themselves (see pg 322-325 of Orientalism, 1978) a specific focus on this theme has been taken up by other theorists and developed under the notion of 'self-orientalism' (see Kondo,1997; Dirlik, 1996) and 'autoexoticism' (Savigliano, 1995). This refers to the idea that following a sustained period of Western domination, post-colonial societies may reject all things 'Western' and embrace an Eastern culturalism that may be identified in 'essentialist' terms. This may be illustrated through global commodifications of culture and nations that translate exoticized representations to symbols of national identity, consistently promoted as symbolic of the country (for example in relation to India, the Taj Mahal)

that serves to straddle between 'authentic' and 'exotic' positionings (Savigliano, 1995).

However, processes of self-orientalism are not necessarily just a post-colonial phenomenon. For instance, orientalist discourses have been used by the antagonists of Empire in presenting the East as a 'utopian alternative to Europe' and to critique the aggressive capitalism and territorialism of the West (Fox, 1989; Gandhi, 1998). In my findings, it is interesting to note that the 'youths of Asian origin' identified magazine discourses that equated Asianness with 'spirituality' in inferiorizing terms. However, they invoked those same representations strategically in their narrations in order to glorify 'Asian culture' in relation to 'Western culture' (e.g. see pg 238).

Contemporary studies of various fields have involved the idea of self-orientalism within the context of commodities. For example, Nagrath (2003) in her study of orientalisms in Indian fashion builds on the aforementioned 'autoexoticizing'. Nagrath describes how some Indian designers have emulated Western trends of exoticizing Indianness 'by placing the sense of India only in particular places and in particular objects that are emblematic of Indian tradition in the West.' There has also been an illustration of self-orientalizing processes between orientalized countries in contemporary contexts. For instance, Kondo (1997) highlights Japanese androcentric orientalist representations of other Asian countries such as Thailand and Bali, which are constructed as feminine and inferior. To recall the earlier discussion of Chapter 1, this serves to challenge notions of a 'homogenous Other' in favour of heterogeneous and differentiated Others along the axes of power, albeit within a wider dynamic of Western Self and Eastern Other.

Although self-Orientalism may be viewed as a form of empowerment, its debilitating and self destructive effects have been noted in terms of consolidating Western hegemony through internalising the historical beliefs of orientalism (Dirlik, 1996). However, it is my view that the above

examples share the tendency to normalize the hegemonic position of orientalist representations. What needs to be highlighted is the encompassing power of hegemonic structures and ideologies in the sense that it is virtually impossible for self-representations to escape influence from this dynamic in some form. In addition, through the normalized use of terms such as 'self-orientalism' or 'autoexoticizing' for practices that have been denoted as 'traditional' or popularly reflect national symbols and cultures, there is a danger of reproducing hegemonic forces of authority and judgement on what has been constructed as the 'Othered Self'. This is an important and complex argument for empowerment within marginality and will be returned to in the concluding discussion.

Beyond Orientalism?

Said argues that a rejection of orientalism entails a rejection of essentialisms; cultural constructions; racial/religious prejudices and an erasure of the line between the West and the East as 'Other'. What is proposed is an evaluation of differences in an objective and subjective fashion as opposed to universalising. In my view there can be little challenge to this in theory and certainly a subjective and contextualised evaluation of difference is identified in the conclusion of this thesis as the most viable level for progression. However, in practice this may reflect a utopian idealism, as I discuss further below.

Orientalism (1978) illustrates how systematic and ingrained practices of orientalism have been and continue to be. Having conveyed through his work, Western strategic motivations for the creation of binaries and the intertwining of knowledge with power, the pervasiveness of such factors seem to become trivialized. It needs to be asked: *how history can be re-written and orientalist constructions erased? And secondly: what individual or entity would knowingly want to relinquish power? and surely objectivity threatens the very basis of that power.* Although a more objective practice would involve the complete reworking of the origins of

knowledge and power is acknowledged by Said, the realistic nature of this premise is not explored. Said (in quoting Raymond Williams) also calls for the "unlearning of the inherent dominative mode" coupled with narrative and self-representation on the part of the 'Oriental'. Following on from what I have said above, this is again problematic because even if the dominant mode called orientalism was 'unlearnt', questions remain as to: *What should be learnt instead and where should that learning come from? Who should teach it?* Or is learning itself a concept to be discarded because (in Foucauldian terms) all knowledge necessarily entails a power relationship.

In addition, narration and self-representation are not devoid of problems, which link to power differentials within 'Orientals' (e.g. based on class and gender; position as cultural producer/consumer). Further, in terms of the earlier discussion on self-orientalism, it is worth questioning how power dynamics should be examined when Orientals are seen to be 'orientalizing' the Orient. However, I have attempted to provide an arena for self-representation and narration to occur, through my biographically based interviews with young people (see Part 5). As I emphasise at various points in this thesis, self-representation consists of limitations (e.g. see pg 200) however, must be valued in itself for affording some dignity and control to/for those voices that have historically been constructed as marginal/silent.

Questioning Orientalism

Orientalism (1978) has provoked debate and criticism from various sources, which have included the following: Firstly, theorists have highlighted the contradictory meanings attributed to the Orient in terms of the existence of a 'real orient' and a discursive representation, both of which Said refers to interchangeably (Lewis,1996;Young,1995). However, my reading views orientalism as a particular portrayal of the East by the West that doesn't necessarily need to have a correlation with the 'real'

Orient, 'real' referring to the geographical location of the East. To quote Said:

"....there were and are cultures and nations whose location is in the East...But the phenomenon of Orientalism as I study it here deals principally...with its ideas about the Orient despite or beyond any correspondence, or lack thereof, with a 'real' Orient" (Said, 1978: 5).

Secondly, the omission of the dynamics of gender and class in Said's discussion has been pointed out as conceptualizing orientalism with a privileging of racial markers (see Pathak et al, 1991). This is despite his usage of the 'feminisation of the Orient' as an example of orientalism coupled with the exclusionary and inferiorizing parallels attributed to the 'Oriental Other' and 'female Other' throughout history. As Pieterse states:

"Not only have women been seen as analogous to slaves, savages and blacks, blacks too have been defined by analogy with women. The 'femininity' or 'passivity' attributed to the 'darker races' has often been mentioned" (Pieterse, 1992: 221).

In addition, critics have seized on the fact that the history of resistance is left out of both orientalist discourses and Said's own critique (Ahmad, 1992; Kennedy, 2000) therefore simplifying the practice of orientalism. However, it is my view that Orientalism (1978) should be and has been treated as a crucial foundation for work on 'the Other' that could be applied to a greater or lesser extent in specific contexts (e.g. see Dirlik, 1996 ; Inden, 1990). It is also worth noting that the aims of Orientalism are to present orientalist discursive representations and their consolidation of colonial hegemony (Gandhi, 1998) as opposed to ambivalences or resistances to them (although Said, 1993 addresses these). Further, it is my view that a 'subaltern history' cannot necessarily be assumed to be the 'true' or 'real' history in view of the problematic nature of self-representation, as has been discussed earlier. However, I have attempted to provide a balanced and thorough account in this thesis and have therefore explored self-representations coupled with gathering

the experiences of 'British white' youth and 'British Asian' youth.

Finally, criticisms from a Marxist stance (Ahmad, 1992) have challenged the emphasis on orientalism as a cause of imperialism and colonialism. Rather, economic issues and military causes are highlighted as reasons for conquest or expansion. However, it is my view that this does not disprove orientalism as having some causal link to imperialism and colonialism. It also incorrectly implies that economic factors can be divorced or placed in hierarchical importance from cultural and ideological ones, which has already been identified as a limitation of Marxism (see pg 67).

Using Orientalism

Leading on from the above point, it is the foregrounding of cultural representations as intrinsically linked to historical, political-economic constructions of Western superiority and Eastern inferiority that is viewed as a particular strength of Orientalism (1978). This conceptualization has been used in the present study in order to explore contemporary processes of orientalism as located in historical and material practices. Therefore I have highlighted racialized representations in a colonial context (see Chapter 5) as well as cultures as commodities in a contemporary context (see Chapter 9). In this sense, Orientalism (1978) enables issues of racism and Otherness to be explored through culture while avoiding an ahistorical and depoliticized approach.

Orientalism (1978) also highlights the operation of racism as a located discursive practice that has generated a catalogue of knowledge that may be used in contemporary representations of Otherness that serve to sustain hegemonic power. This is considered an important issue in the present thesis and I have attempted to explore the interlinked processes of language, knowledge and power through the spectrum of visual discourses (see Chapters 10-12) in order to illustrate orientalism within contemporary popular culture. However, I have attempted to go beyond

Orientalism (1978) by not only concentrating on hegemonic representations but also self-representations in the form of visual discourses from British Asian publications. This was considered important on the level of enabling agency within minority positions coupled with assessing the effectiveness of self-representation in challenging dominant ideologies through discursive modes.

In looking at areas of self-representation within an overall analysis of orientalism, I have inevitably encountered themes of self-orientalism that Said's study has engendered in the work of various commentators (e.g. Kondo, 1997). However, as indicated earlier in this chapter, I aim to enrich debates in this area by problematising the concept and meaning in terms of its role in reproducing hegemonic frames of reference.

I have also moved beyond the remit of Orientalism (1978) not only in terms of extending the study from a literary focus to popular culture but also by combining a subjective textual analysis with reader responses (see Chapters 10 -12). This constitutes a significant enhancement of Orientalism (1978) through highlighting the importance of interpretation in relation to meaning and knowledge. Further, by contextualising responses within individual biographies I have been able to gain a greater insight into not only cultural representations but lived experiences of culture. This has also enabled attention to heterogeneity (identified as lacking in Orientalism) in terms of ambivalences and commonalities, which emerge particularly in terms of gender in this thesis (e.g. see pg 270). Attention is given to the gendered nature of colonial discourse for instance in the next chapter that focuses on cultural representations within a context of the British Raj.

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Summary

In this chapter I have highlighted the strengths of Orientalism (1978) in terms of its focus on culture as located within historical and political-economic contexts. This has enabled the West to represent the East as inferior through racializing discursive practices that centre on the use of language and knowledge as power. I have also drawn attention to the way in which I have made use of Said's Orientalism in my study through firstly, extending his literature and textual focus to popular culture coupled with subjective interpretations (reader responses). Secondly, I have enhanced his approach by attending to gender dimensions and self-representations of which the latter involves the idea of self-orientalism. This has emerged in the work of various theorists following Orientalism (1978) to refer to the adopting of orientalist frames of reference by 'Orientals' themselves. I have attempted to not only explore but also problematise notions of self-orientalism and practices of self-representation in this thesis. Regarding the latter, I have questioned the extent to which Said's call for self-representation can actually in practice result in a change to hegemonic representations (this shall be discussed further in Chapter 14 and the conclusion).

Chapter 5: The 'Asian Other' in Colonial Discourse

"The Golden Age of the British Empire was the Golden Age of British Racism too" (Fryer,1984: 165).

It has been well documented that in order to justify colonial exploitation, a racist and orientalist world view was expounded which revolved around and promoted the notion of inherent white European supremacy (Hiro, 1992; Said, 1978) a mentality which imbued Britain's colonisation of India. However, there have been challenges to the portrayal of orientalism as a consistently uniform and negative discourse. For instance, in relation to India, Trautmann (1997) describes how British Orientalism went through a transformation of extremes from 'Indomania' to 'Indophobia'. The former is reflected in the late eighteenth century when Indian culture was depicted in positive terms due to the linking of Sanskrit (ancient language of India) to ancient European languages. However, by the early nineteenth century, this view came to be replaced by a more negative orientalist perspective that presented Indians as morally corrupt and degraded from a great ancient civilisation (Trautman, 1997; Matsukawa, 2000). It should be noted that 'evidence' of this decline of Indian civilization was seen to be the degraded status of Hindu women. This is an important point, not only in terms of orientalist representations but also in relation to the nationalist discourses it engendered with reference to the position of Indian women, which I shall return to later (see pg 92).

The fact that European images of India underwent several changes through colonization by different forces (e.g. Portuguese, Dutch, British) points to the complex and changeable dynamics between 'Self' and 'the Other'. However, as discussed in the previous chapter, Said (1978) illustrates how orientalism as a discourse serves to generate binaries and homogenous categories that have become hegemonic. In addition the wider power inequalities within which relations between 'Self' and 'Other' exist has a significant impact on the regimes of discourse that achieve a degree of resonance in the socio-cultural and political arena.

It is my view that Orientalism is one such discourse as if viewed in its 'positive' (e.g. 'Indomania') or overtly negative form (e.g. 'Indophobia') links to a practice that involves surrendering individuals, groups, countries and continents to a self proclaimed superior Eurocentric 'gaze' in imperial and post-imperial contexts. The latter in terms of contemporary cultural discourses again hinge on the notion of revering 'exotic difference' coupled with an 'inferiorizing' gaze (e.g. see pgs 180-183). This suggests the existence of different facets of orientalist discourse that may be used solely or together at any one time in representations of 'the East'.

An important point to emerge in studies of orientalism during India's colonial period is the way a fear of the 'unknown' became the catalyst to acquisition of knowledge about India which inturn aided conquest. Therefore, orientalist interest in the languages, literature, law, scientific innovations etc of India facilitated imperial control from 'within' through reproducing indigenous aspects in a controlled system and language of the colonizers (see Makdisi, 1998 ; Suleri, 1993). This reflects the important link between knowledge and power that Orientalism (1978) has highlighted (as discussed in Chapter 4).

Studies of colonial India have also emphasised that images of India were not produced by Europeans alone, but always in collaboration with elite Indians. For instance, Marshall (1997) has claimed that the Hindu law that was used in courts during the early stages of the Raj depended upon the Indian Brahmins (or 'pundits') whom the British consulted. They translated ancient texts such as the 'Vedas', which was seen to represent the roots of Indian civilization. Thus a law was to an extent created based on the ideals of Indian elites and therefore inequalities based on class, caste and gender were glossed over only to be illuminated later by orientalists as justification for India's need to be ruled (Chakravarty, 1989). Incidentally this process can be transposed to a different context and time in terms of contemporary national media images of India. These have been highlighted as configuring nationalism with a middle class

consumerism that serves to wipe out images of the poor and marginalised (Chakravarty and Gooptu, 2000).

Marshall also seeks to highlight the existence of 'hybridity' under the Raj through the mixing of British and Indian influences, inspite of the inequalities in power between Britain and India through British domination. However, although Marshall acknowledges Britain's hegemonic position, he does not give enough weight to that power dynamic in his analysis. Taking over Indian structures and personnel is 'colonization' (albeit through force and/or strategic alliances with indigenous peoples) and cannot be simply seen as a 'hybridisation of influences' when the power differentials and outcomes are so varied. Moreover, as mentioned earlier, this 'domination from within' was a crucial factor in enabling the success of the imperial project in India and 'hybridity' has been recognised as a central goal of nineteenth century imperial administrators in general (Young, 1995). However, the dynamics emerging from such intricate processes of power consolidation point to significant contradictions and complexities arising at the site of the colonized themselves. As India's most famed anti-colonialist stated in 1938:

"...we want the English rule without the Englishman. You want the tiger's nature but not the tiger..." (Mahatma Gandhi quoted in Gandhi, 1998: 21).

Marshall also makes the point that the Indian elites and intellectuals took more from the West than any British person took from India, which was largely confined to 'dress' and 'diet' in terms of the latter. In contrast however, various studies of the colonial period in India have demonstrated the importance of these elements. For example, Ray (1998) points to colonial travellers who continued to wear Indian clothing after returning to Britain. She also points to the overall blurring of identities in relation to the taste and lifestyle of the British in India that saw English men and women 'stepping dangerously close to the Other'. While the symbolic nature of dress shall be illustrated in the present study

(e.g. see pg 258) Marshall's claim becomes particularly interesting in light of contemporary Western appropriations of Asianness in various aspects of popular culture.

Further studies of British images of India during Empire substantiate Said's linking of orientalism with imperialism. For example, DeNeve (1997) argues that visual images focused on fixed, orientalist representations of India as backward and exotic. She argues that through reproductions in travel books, postcards etc, the 'Indian world' was made usable for British capitalism and came to define India for the masses in Britain, that ultimately fuelled its complicity with the notion of Empire. In Part Four, I shall illustrate the transposition of such a constructed 'Indian world' beyond the days of Empire to the discourse of contemporary magazine images.

At this point however, I would like to move the discussion on to exploring the representations of India by British/Western women (e.g. travel writers) which perhaps offers a distinct view of 'the Other' and 'the colonial gaze' and a challenge to the conventional masculine discourse of orientalism and Empire. It has been argued that British women in India although active in colonialism were themselves victims of confinement (Suleri, 1993) by virtue of their 'partially othered' gendered status. It should also be noted that the class differences between British women acted as a determinant of what aspects of India were made 'visible' to them and subsequently what representations were transmitted for readership and viewing 'back home' (Ray, 1998). What is highlighted through women's representations is the disruption of the idea of an 'absolute Other' that constituted masculine discourse, in favour of a 'proximity to difference', for instance, as Melman states:

"Women travellers, missionaries and writers did not perceive the oriental woman as the absolutely alien, the ultimate 'other'. Rather oriental women became the feminine West's recognisable image in the mirror. The haremlik was not the ne plus ultra of an exotic décor, but a place comparable to the bourgeois home" (Melman, 1992: 316).

The domestication of the 'harem' or 'zenana' (women's quarters) in terms of the British middle class home was a common image depicted in paintings and writings by women and served as a challenge to popular orientalist conceptions of the harem as a sexually charged space (Lewis, 1996). However, the harem in its actual or imagined state has provided a central point of analysis for European male and female painters and travel writers etc and has constituted an important representation of the Orient and in particular the Oriental woman. In addition, it is the hegemonic orientalist 'knowledge' of the East that holds contemporary resonance with the harem being popularly viewed as an erotic realm. It could also be argued that the 'domestication' of the Orient was not exclusive to women and indeed was a reflection of broader nineteenth century attitudes towards the Orient in general, in terms of India being represented as 'a sick Europe that needed to be looked after' (Makdisi, 1998).

Further analyses of women travellers/residents in colonial India have illustrated an ambivalence related to positioning, reflecting multi-positionalities. For instance, their position as Other within British society conflicts with their own Othering of Indian culture in a colonial context. In the context of early-nineteenth century societal positions, women embodied the domestic because of gender, but that was undermined through their position as white colonizer in India (see Brown, 1999).

Other analyses have demonstrated a mirroring of masculine discourses. For instance, Mills (1991) has argued that while women writers criticized colonialism, their concern often revolved around the same assumptions of white superiority and modernity that fuelled imperial policy. Moreover, others have suggested that this 'concern' was essentially self-serving. For example, Burton (1994) argues that India and Indian women were used as a site of social and political intervention for British feminists justifying claims to the government for the empowerment of women in Britain first, in order for Indian women to then be empowered.

Finally, in terms of women's roles during Empire, Chaudhuri (1994) has argued that through the wives of colonial administrators and missionaries (British 'memsahibs') a largely negative image of Indians was transposed to Britain through letters and articles, generating a catalogue of knowledge that could be revived at any time. He argues that through derogatory writings about their Indian servants, the memsahibs identified themselves as active participants in Britain's imperial project in India.

Chaudhuri also argues that the Indian mutiny (1857) coupled with the emergence of Social Darwinism (which expounded a hierarchy of racial order based on Anglo-Saxon superiority) served to justify beliefs that Indians were 'subhuman savages' which inturn justified British imperialism. Mitter (1997) also reveals negative images of Indians in a study of cartoon images produced during the Raj in British magazines such as 'Punch' and British-owned comic magazines in India. These cartoons included caricatures of the Westernized Bengali that reflected a deep-rooted resentment of the educated Bengali elite. In a reflection of Homi Bhabha's notions of 'mimicry' (see pg 46) Mitter also illustrates how self-representations by Bengali artists utilized means of 'self-mockery and parody' in Indian-produced comic magazines. Through satires, colonial officials and their Indian allies, Westernised Indians as well as Westernised impositions of values and dress became easy targets.

The threat of emancipated Indian women, playing on men's fears of emasculation, also featured in Indian produced caricatures, for instance: "the wife relaxing and reading a novel while the husband lights the coal oven in the kitchen" (Mitter, 1997). Such portrayals of women not only existed in the realm of caricature but also in Indian produced literature continuing into the 1930's. Here, against a backdrop of women's increasing participation in nationalist movements, the political and Westernised Indian woman who wanted a role outside the home was ridiculed (Sarkar, 1989). This led to condemnation of the degeneration of Indian women as a result of foreign rule and the subsequent invoking of glorified imagery of Indian womanhood located in the 'Vedic' period (e.g.

the mythical devoted wife 'Savitri'). As mentioned earlier in this chapter, this image cut across orientalist and early nineteenth century nationalist writers. In other words, India's Golden Age was highlighted as the reason to revere India by early 'benevolent' Orientalists. That same period was seized upon by Utilitarians who used the degraded status of Hindu women as evidence of the degeneration of the Hindu civilization and the need for British rule. In addition, the emerging Indian middle class in an attempt to counter such attacks, clung on to the orientalist representation of India's Golden Age and the image of 'ideal Indian womanhood' (crucially, this meant high class, Hindu women) contained within it. In such a way:

"The Europeans who had successfully constituted their own 'true' history were now engaged in giving to Indians the greatest gift of all-a history" (Chakravarty, 1989: 31).

While this point is important, in my view there is an inherent limitation with this conceptualization that links to the earlier discussion on self-orientalism (see pg 80). It assumes that a traditional formulation of India's history could only be realized through orientalist representations and not before or autonomous from this. In doing so, it reinforces the hegemonic position of orientalist knowledge and discourse, a point I shall return to in the concluding discussion.

With regards to the 'high literature' of Anglo-Indian writers such as Indian born, Kipling, the representation of Indian women was subsumed within a masculinist and orientalist discourse, rendering them 'doubly other'. McBratney (1988) claims that in Kipling's work, Indian men represent the possibility of bonding across 'race' and culture, while Indian women represent a "dangerous hybridization" and a specific threat to British rule based on their cultural and gender difference. Such representations hinged on the 'sexual predator' image of the 'Oriental Other' and in particular the eroticism of the Oriental / Asian female, who was seen as a threat to racial purity through relations with British men. This had been a

reality in the eighteenth century when East India Company Officials took up Indian mistresses or common law wives, known as 'bibis' (Nevile, 2000).

Further studies of colonial relations between India and Britain have also concentrated on highlighting the voice of the colonized, not included in Orientalism (1978) through representations made *of* the colonizer. For instance, Naithani (2001) has looked at 'folk narratives' amongst colonised Indians during the nineteenth century. Her findings illustrate that the narratives of the colonised reflect an active consciousness that sought to construct 'the Englishman' (by virtue of his intrinsic relationship with the colonial government) through a mix of traditional imagery and contemporary reality, as a dangerous entity who couldn't be trusted.

Finally, Lahiri's (2000) study involves analysis of how Indians have been represented in British popular culture (e.g. press; advertisements) during the colonial period, through focusing on the dynamics centred on India/Indian students who came to Britain during the late nineteenth to early twentieth century. Her findings point to one-dimensional orientalist representations in terms of, for instance, 'poverty' 'spirituality' 'corruption' that promoted British supremacy. The representation of difference in fixed, orientalist moulds was seen to serve an imperial function in minimizing indigenous threat in popular colonial ideology and can also be linked to processes of 'nostalgic mourning' (see Kondo, 1997). Here proximity to difference undermines or alters the original state of the Other, therefore limiting the actual gap of difference between colonizer and colonized. As the colonized are seen to take on traits of the colonizer, this results in insecurity and fear among the colonizer who mourns the loss of the 'authentic' character of the Other. A sense of nostalgic mourning can be seen in contemporary magazine discourses that serve to revive nostalgic orientalist representations of 'the Asian Other' (e.g. see pgs 160 -165).

To conclude this chapter, underpinning Lahiri's study is the focus on the 'interaction' of Indians with Britain, and vice versa therefore she also draws attention to the gap between expectations and outcomes of the encounter from both sides. She argues that both:

"British and Indian constructions of each other were influenced by the notion of 'authenticity'. Just as the British entertained a romanticised ideal of the 'real' India uncontaminated by the West, similarly many Indian students came to Britain searching for the 'true' England-liberal, just and anti-imperialist...Official British policy was affected by negative imagery in British popular culture and the climate of opinion in India. Indian expectations clashed with the realities of racial discrimination....which reinforced political and national affiliations" (Lahiri, 2000: 212-213).

While the Empire in its structural aspect has been liquidated, the racist, orientalist ideology that it engendered hinged on notions of white supremacy, far from being discarded, continue to form a tenacious part of British society. This has been illustrated in Chapter 2 in terms of the socio-economic experiences of Asians who came to Britain post-independence and shall be illustrated further through contemporary cultural representations and youth narratives later in this thesis (see Parts Four and Five).

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Summary

In this chapter I have illustrated the historical processes of orientalism in relation to Indo-British colonial dynamics. What I have attempted to highlight is the objectified manner in which Indian culture/Indians were represented through various avenues as 'different' and exotic (in benevolent or negative terms). Their inferior representation served to justify their colonisation. Although the heterogeneous character of this colonial discourse has been noted, particularly in terms of 'white female' alternatives to masculinist ideologies, this did not alter the superior

positioning of 'white Western' power. Challenges to this dominance have been highlighted in the form of nationalist images that point to self-representations as a means of empowerment but also as a means of consolidating indigenous male dominance. The limitations inherent in areas of self-representation have already been highlighted (see Chapter 4) and will be illustrated further in the latter parts of this thesis.

Having provided a theoretical and contextual basis for the present study, the next part of the thesis focuses on the methodologies that I have used in order to explore orientalist representations of 'Asian culture' within the contemporary print media.

PART THREE

Methodologies

As illustrated through my research questions, I am interested in exploring the extent to which media discourses of Asianness reflect and/or challenge an orientalist and racialized representation and the impact such processes have on youth identities and dynamics. My research study has been geared towards 'uncovering hidden meanings' hence I have utilized a qualitative analysis in the form of various approaches based on an interpretive sociological tradition, with an explicit acknowledgement of my role and influence as a researcher at all times. For the purposes of this study, I have attempted to approach the media, as a part of popular culture that operates and is experienced through a circuit of *production, text and consumption* where all are inextricably linked and should be aimed to be researched as such. This has been attempted through utilizing a social semiotic approach to conducting research that views culture not as a self contained system of signification but as a sign system operating within a socio-political context (Gottdeiner, 1995). In practice, this has meant:

- *I have attempted to capture the point of view and motivations of cultural producers through semi structured interviews with various magazine staff/representatives.*
- *Through conducting biographical interviews with a selection of young people, coupled with presenting them with visual discourses to comment on, I have attempted to gauge the contextualized opinions of cultural consumers/ participants.*
- *I have performed analysis of selected media visual discourses, that is magazine images and words that represent 'Asian culture' in some form, using the tools of semiotics and discourse analysis, with an eye on those mechanisms that reign in meaning, for instance, ideologies through 'myths' and power through discourse.*

These approaches are discussed individually across the next three chapters, beginning with a description of the interview methodologies that have been used in this research.

Chapter 6: Interviews

1. Semi-Structured Interviews with Media Producers

Ethics and Confidentiality

Ethical considerations were adhered to throughout and participation in my research project was entirely voluntary and involved no persistence or persuasion on my part. The interviewee's needs were always paramount, be that in terms of conducting interviews at their preferred time / location or respecting their time schedule and privacy. At the time of making contact with potential interviewees, assurances were given that names of magazines and staff/representatives would not be revealed. Rather, pseudonyms and/or general work positions would be used. Permission was also asked to tape the interviews and assurances given that only I would have access to the original material.

Method

As mentioned in the introduction of this thesis, while the importance of a political economy approach to media and culture are recognized, due to space limitations in the current study to focus on a number of areas thoroughly, this does not constitute my research focus. However, I thought it would be useful to gain some insight into the views and motivations of some 'media producers'. Therefore interviews of a fairly structured nature (although adhering to no strict schedule) were conducted with respective editorial staff of 'British mainstream' and 'British Asian' magazines in order to gather how far the aims and motivations of media producers correspond with those of consumers, in a racialised, orientalist and capitalist context.

Magazine staff were contacted from magazines that on a personal level were read regularly and included those from which visual discourses had been selected for this study (fashion/lifestyle magazines). Staff members

were contacted (ranging from picture editors to feature writers for a spectrum of opinion) via a letter that briefly explained the nature of my research and requested an interview with them. Of the 6 that I contacted, 2 did not respond (these were from 'mainstream' magazines). The 4 that have been interviewed for this study constituted 2 each from British mainstream and British Asian magazines. Interviews took place during January / February 2002 and lasted between 20-30mins and took place at magazine offices or cafes, at the suggestion of the interviewee. The interviews included the following areas:

- *Aims of magazine and target audiences*
- *Motivations behind images and use of language*
- *Thoughts on the proliferation of 'Asian Culture' in the UK*

In addition, I chose to interview two magazine models, each from British English and Asian ethnicities who could offer some insight into their experiences as media workers and embodiments of media images. Magazine staff here acted as gatekeepers, providing me with a list of names and contact details from which an informal meeting was arranged with the first two models who agreed to be interviewed and this took place at their respective residences, on their request. The interviews lasted on average 40 mins and were again semi structured while encouraging them to speak freely about their experiences and opinions of the media fashion industry where they worked.

The main findings / quotations from all these interviews are largely contained in Parts Four and Five of this thesis and are reflected upon in the concluding discussion.

Constraints

Overall time was an important constraining factor, with all of the magazine staff and models adhering to tight schedules and in two

instances, interviews took place after a few cancellations. Universally, there seemed a suspicion at my motives for conducting the research and certainly this appeared to hinder an open dialogue at times. In particular, 'mainstream' magazine staff glossed over themes of 'race' and culture whereas the British Asian magazine staff and the British Asian model in particular, broached such areas themselves. My own positioning as a young British Asian may have been influential here with the issues covered and quality of responses offered being linked to perceptions of my identity positioning. For instance, the British Asian model told me that she felt comfortable talking to me about racism she had experienced in the industry because I was Asian. This can also be seen in terms of the youth narratives I gathered, as described during the remainder of this chapter.

2. Biographically based interviews

Ethics and Confidentiality

Youth (constituted by 18-30yr olds) participation in this project was completely voluntary and typically characterized by enthusiasm. Potential interviewees were approached by me in a social space we both occupied on a regular basis or were enabled to contact me via email in order to participate in the research, both of which are described shortly (pgs 101-102). Through both avenues, potential interviewees were given time and space to confirm their wish to participate and were assured they could change their mind for participation in the project at any time, before-during-or even after the interview. At all times they were encouraged to share any questions or worries they may have. Although the interviewees were characterized by adults that were not considered a 'vulnerable group' the proposed interview methodology would involve the use of narratives that potentially could cover emotional issues coupled with the fact that interviewees would participate in responding to visual discourses (as shall be described in Chapter 8). Therefore consent of participation was gained from each interviewee that was in complete accordance with the ethical requirements of the Institution at which this research was

carried out. In the eventuality that any situation caused the interviewee to become upset or troubled, they were assured that the process would be stopped immediately and I would be there to listen and comfort them to the best of my ability. From here, the choice to participate further in the study, at a later date or not at all would remain entirely with the interviewee, with no pressure from me. The interviewees were given complete control over time and location and considerable control over the subject matter of interviews. This was very important in ensuring their comfort and trust in me and the research in general.

I informed potential interviewees that the research was for my PhD and may be published in some form at a later date. I felt that it was ethically important to be as honest and open as possible about my research with people who were allowing me into their lives, therefore they were given substantial information regarding the subject matter of the research. However, specific details and aims (e.g. exploring issues of racism) were not shared so as to avoid unduly influencing biographies and instead a more general presentation was given, in terms of it being about issues of culture and identity. On reflection, even this information may have impacted on the research findings in terms of firstly, affecting the decision to take part in the study in terms of those who had an interest in issues of culture, for instance being more inclined to take part. Secondly, this may have influenced the type of narratives produced in the sense that participants were aware of certain research themes and therefore particular biographical emphasis may have been given to experiences that aligned with these themes. At the same time, the biographical method (discussed shortly) allows for a range of life experiences to be covered that from a particular starting point may lead to discussion of a theme that was not overtly mentioned at the outset by the researcher. For instance, in terms of my research, although themes of culture were mentioned to the interviewees, and while many of the narratives included these issues, they also broached other experiences that included, 'the family'; 'personal freedom'; 'work' etc.

Certainly, the level of disclosure by social researchers while conducting fieldwork poses a dilemma (e.g. see Mauthner, 2000) and whatever information is disclosed/ undisclosed will influence the research process and findings to a greater/lesser extent.

All interviews were conducted, transcribed and analyzed by myself and each respondent was given a guarantee of anonymity and privacy. In these interests, the real names of those who were interviewed and those names/places they may mention during the narrative have not been used and have been replaced by pseudonyms. Prior to the interview, each respondent was asked for permission to tape the conversation in order to make transcribing easier and accurate; assurances were given that only I would have access to original interview material.

Sample

The interviews were carried out with 20 interviewees who were found through two avenues, namely:

1. Attending 'Asian club nights' in London (over a period of two months/June-August 2002) and approaching potential interviewees on the basis of those who had been seen there at least three times, reflecting some form of regular attendance. These nights that are mainly aimed at students and young professionals I have named, as follows:
    - [3]*Masti* at Bombay Bar
    - *Dil* at Bombay Bar
    - *Chandni* at The Art Venue

These places were known personally as I had frequented them on a number of occasions in a social capacity, prior to beginning this research and it was in this space that ideas for my study began to formulate and as

[3] For ethical reasons club names/locations are not provided, instead Psudeynoms are used.

such constituted the main sampling frame for a purposive sampling strategy to be employed.

2. Placing an advertisement regarding a brief about the research and requests for interviewees in an online 'Asian Society' forum-The Asian Cultural Channel (http://www.asiansociety.com). This site contains a variety of discussion forums, largely centred around 'race' and culture alongside features on popular culture, such as fashion. From this, people were free to contact me to ask any questions and if they wished to take part in the project.

Both of the above approaches generated a good response and created a 'snowball effect' with further interviewees being suggested by the respondents themselves. However, selection of interviewees was restricted to the above two avenues, due to their direct integration in an Asian oriented cultural medium and having had direct contact with me, in some form. Despite the value and importance of these avenues to my research on 'Asian culture', it is important to acknowledge the limitations this places on the interviewee profiles / findings from the outset. For instance, the Asian night club route is largely geared towards Asian students and professionals, therefore providing a largely Asian, 'middle class' and perhaps more 'culturally aware' interviewee pool. Although, 'white English' and different class groupings were found and included from this avenue, alternative findings may have been gathered if the research avenues took the form of, for example: schools, places of worship, manual sectors etc. This may have allowed for various factors to come to the fore in research findings, for instance, age, religion, class etc. However, due to the emphasis on youth popular culture and the consumption of Asian culture in particular, I felt it was appropriate to choose interviewees from avenues that reflected this orientation.

The sample of 20 was characterized by 18-30yr olds; 10 British Asian and 10 British white English, with equal numbers of men and women, from a

range of backgrounds and professions (an individual biographical synopsis is included at the end of this chapter and interviewee profiles in the Appendix). Alongside 'race' and ethnicity, gender and class are identified as interrelated constituting factors in identity positionings therefore the inclusion of the latter two aspects in the sample was considered important. However, 'class' does not emerge as a significant factor in the findings of the present study which, as highlighted earlier (pg 102) may be a reflection of the 'race' and culture orientation of the research and means through which the sample was chosen. An explicit focus on class for instance may have yielded very different material from the same sources. Basic criteria for inclusion in the sample were the following: age; residing in London, being born in Britain and being of either 'white English' or 'south Asian' origin, as discussed in the introduction of this thesis.

Time and Location

The interviews were conducted over three months (August - October 2002) and at the interviewees' choice of location, which consisted of their homes or local cafes and in some instances, places of work. On average, the interviews lasted 2hrs with (on the basis of individual consent) a further meeting taking place with the respondents for the second part of the interview, which involved the inter-relational use of magazine visual discourses (described in Chapter 8). All 20 youths expressed a wish to be involved in the second part of the interview and my original intention was to conduct both parts of the interview process on the same day. However, due to the in-depth and potentially emotive nature of the biographical interview, coupled with practicality, I felt it was more considerate to interviewees to conduct the second part at a later date (on average this took place within 2-4 wks of the first interview). This also gave them time to reflect if they really wanted to play a further role in the research. In addition, on an instrumental level, this was considered more beneficial to the research, where the personal biography and the visual material that I was introducing were not seen to unduly influence the

situation. Although once visual materials were shown, respondents were free to elaborate beyond this.

Method

A biographical approach aims to gather a 'life story' from the interviewee, allowing them to 'narrate' events in their lives in order to understand how people see their own experiences and interactions (Atkinson, 1998). Because there is meant to be very little direct questioning from the researcher, it is easy to assume that a 'true' life is being presented and a 'real' Self has been accessed. This relates to ongoing debates around the nature of identity where on the one hand, the Self in late modernity is seen as unitary and autonomous, free to choose its identity amidst a collapse of traditional identity shaping forms such as religion (see Giddens, 1991). This individualization approach has been challenged by post structuralist thought which seeks to locate the formation of identity in processes of difference (see Budgeon, 2003). As such, far from being 'free', the Self continues to be located and constrained within a wider socio-historical context. Certainly, the narratives of the 'youth of Asian origin' in particular highlight a Self that is intrinsically linked to historical and contemporary experiences/awareness of racisms. However, this may not have come to the fore had they not been 'narrating' their life stories to a young British Asian. It is important to note that the same life events may be presented differently to a different listener which does not mean that what is now being presented is any 'less real', rather the process may throw light on the located nature of 'multiple Selves'. These issues point to the need to view narratives of the Self not as necessarily authentic representations of a fixed identity but as specific, contextualized and variable constructions of complex subjectivities (Anthias, 1999; Budgeon, 2003; Mauthner, 2000).

A largely biographical style of interviewing was chosen as it was felt to be the most appropriate for my aims of finding out about individual youth experiences and views on issues of 'race', culture and identity. This was coupled with previous positive experiences with this method in an official

research project (see Anthias and Mehta, 2003 for an insight) through which people are enabled to 'narrate' their experiences and have more freedom and control over such a 'conversational style interview' as opposed to feeling restricted in responses to numerous questions. Therefore the biographical method was chosen above other methods such as questionnaires and more structured interviews. The biographical method is particularly conducive to gathering people's opinions and experiences, which can often be of a personal nature and requires the respondent to feel very comfortable. My interviewer input took the form of encouraging and understanding probing throughout as opposed to seeking to direct the narrative flow, therefore using the respondent's own words as a springboard for further conversation. As such this method is in line with what has been described as a feminist and anti-racist research approach that aims to empower the interviewee as much as possible (see Puwar, 1997/Web source).

However, *some* direction was given to the interviewee biography in terms of mainly using the point of contact (e.g. Asian club night) as an initiation into the narrative, along the lines of: *'what do you like about Bombay Bar?'* as opposed to a more open ended beginning such as: *'tell me about yourself.'* This was largely due to the salience of culture and in particular 'Asian culture' (as it is experienced and/or imagined) to my research questions hence using the form of cultural medium where I first had contact with the interviewee as a starting point seemed both an appropriate and natural way of entering into conversation.

In addition, stemming from my own often contradictory feelings related to being a young Asian born in Britain (see pg 13) I was interested to know how these young people (although not just the British Asians) identified themselves, for example in terms of ethnicity, if at all. While ethnic origin was a basic criterion for inclusion into the sampling frame, I was reluctant to ask it as a specific question during the course of the interview. This was to avoid influencing responses that may have been given in terms of what respondents felt was the 'expected' response depending on, for

instance, how they perceived the research area and/or me. I therefore tried to integrate the question into the narrative, if possible, where it seemed appropriate from something the respondent may have said that could lead on to such a probe. However, this is not to suggest that because someone has 'said' they see themselves as 'British Asian' for example, in an interview context, that this is necessarily a 'true' expression of feeling. This response may be different depending on mood and who they are talking to plus of course varying identifications may be asserted in different contexts. This itself reflects the multiple and fluid nature of selves and identity and the problems inherent in trying to ascribe it with a fixed and singular status, as discussed earlier (pg 104).

For the above reasons and the fact that the second part of the interview process involved asking respondents to give some response to my selected visual discourses, I refer to such interviews as biographically *based* interviews.

Interview Analysis

While it has been acknowledged that there is no specific means of conducting or analysing biographical interview data (Chamberlayne et al, 2000) I have analysed the narratives based on ideas from Grounded Theory, as originally expounded by Glaser and Strauss (1967). This has involved focusing on the sequence in which themes and topics appear through the narrative and analysing the dominant (overt) and latent (covert) biographical themes, in terms of identifying the structuring mechanisms in people's lives. Having transcribed the interviews, I analysed each narrative transcript to identify 'themes' that stemmed from the data in terms of perceptions and experiences that emerged in terms of the experiencing subject. Themes that emerged in each narrative have been compared and contrasted with those from other narratives in order to identify core issues and patterns of commonality and difference. For presentational purposes in Part Five, these themes have been grouped together under three subjective chapter headings that highlight the salient

elements of themes included within each (e.g. Chapter 14 is entitled 'Cultural Terrains' and covers various themes related to 'culture' that emerged through the narratives). However, I have preferred to move away from a conventional positivistic Grounded Theory, in terms of for instance assuming the position of a 'neutral observer who discovers the data,' towards a more constructivist grounded approach. This recognises the implication of the researcher in the nature of his/her findings and retains subjective experience and meaning as far as possible in an interpretive context (Charmaz, 2003). I have also avoided coding themes in any rigid, scientific way (e.g. line by line coding) which can unnecessarily fragment and decontextualize the data (see Seale, 2004). This would have disrupted the aims of gathering narrative interviews and my additional interest which was also to view the interview material as 'discourse'. Therefore I have also made use of another data driven approach, that of *discourse analysis*, in terms of seeing how the biographers used language in the construction of their social worlds. The importance of language and knowledge in relation to power has been highlighted in Chapter 4. While I shall be discussing discourse analysis in the next chapter, it should be noted that there is some contradiction between traditional proponents of Grounded Theory and the aims of discourse analysis. The former seeks recourse to an external, objective reality of which the researcher is a neutral representative. However in terms of discourse analysis, 'reality' is only known through discourse, of which the researcher plays an integral role in creating, which as mentioned above is something that a more constructivist grounded approach acknowledges (Charmaz, 2003).

That theory should emerge from or be 'grounded' in the data itself, as opposed to approaching the data with pre-conceived theories or questions, constitutes a central notion of Grounded Theory. This is an important issue and it was crucial from the outset to allow space for self-representation as much as possible, rather than rely on grand theories or previous research findings to speak for individuals or groups. Therefore I

have tried to 'let the data speak for itself' through reproducing pieces of individual narrations and building arguments upon these findings. However, as I highlighted at the outset (see introduction) the guiding approach for this research is Said's Orientalism (1978) which has influenced my aims, explorations and inevitably then, analysis. The intrinsic link between theory and research and the means through which one can develop the other has been noted (see Silverman, 2004). Theory is considered important for avoiding a narrow focus through placing attention on society/social forces, and ideas from a variety of theories have been made use of in this study (see Chapter 3). However, the imposition of overarching theory may mould the research through the testing of specific hypotheses and may therefore limit the range of findings gathered. Therefore, I have used Orientalism (1978) as a 'guide' to exploring racializing processes within the media through investigating research areas (see pg 9) as opposed to testing hypotheses. Further, I have also placed considerable value on individual interpretations and experiences through use of the biographical method and Grounded Theory. I have aimed to approach the data without 'forcing' theoretical frameworks upon it and in line with qualitative methodology in general, have facilitated the generation of hypotheses. This approach has enabled a focus on the themes that have 'emerged' from individual interviews to be compared across the sample; compared with the findings from the other methods that have been used (e.g. semiotics) and compared with literature/theoretical ideas. This has allowed room for the data to contradict, challenge and/or enhance my research questions and underlying assumptions as opposed to conveniently serving to confirm them.

Representativeness and Validity

With regards to the biographical interview and analytical process in general, it is important to be aware of the high level of subjectivity inevitably involved during interpretation. This does limit the extent to which this method can be seen as representative or valid. This forms part

of a wider debate on positivist methods of enquiry that aim to mirror the natural sciences as much as possible and non positivist methodology that sees the social sciences as distinct and therefore advocates alternative methods and emphasis, based on subjectivity and interpretation. It has been argued elsewhere that questions of validity, universality and reliability are concepts from the quantitative research paradigm that are not necessarily appropriate for qualitative research. This is involved in the very notion of understanding subjective experiences and opinions and is exactly what is valued in interpretive/phenomenological approaches (Janesick, 2003).

In line with this, the present research study is not intended to be representative of populations; rather it is a study into the opinions and experiences of a small number of individuals, whose perspectives may find commonalities within the wider populations (including mine) of which we form a part. However, the variety of research methods I have used in this thesis has attempted to increase the validity of findings through substantiating/challenging data gathered through each specific method.

Limitations of the Biographical Method

As discussed earlier, the biographical method is seen to be an appropriate and useful tool for enabling people to talk openly about their life experiences and views. It should be noted that many of the interviewees expressed feeling 'relaxed' and 'comfortable' with this interview method and in some instances, the interview process seemed to perform a 'therapeutic' and emotional role for the interviewee and myself. In the vast majority of interactions with interviewees, I felt that I was placed as 'a friend' and in many instances I was told that "it's like talking to an old friend so I don't mind telling you this stuff". This evoked interesting feelings regarding my role as a researcher as I felt very happy that these people who were kind enough to give up their time and share their intimate experiences with me felt so comfortable that I was seen as

a 'friend'. Indeed, the high level of honesty that I experienced from the interviewees (across gender and ethnicity) may be a reflection of the way I was 'seen'. However, simultaneously, I also felt a sense of guilt on two levels, firstly, while I consider myself to be a friendly and sensitive person which naturally filters into my research practice, my 'real' purpose was to gather material for a PhD rather than engender friendships. Indeed the ethical questions posed in terms of 'doing rapport' have been raised elsewhere (see Duncombe & Jessop, 2002). Secondly, due to the potentially evocative nature of my subject matter coupled with the process of the biographical method there were times when interviewees touched on highly emotional issues. While it was natural for me to exercise sensitivity here and let the interviewees know that they 'didn't have to talk about this' etc, I found that they wanted to carry on and as highlighted earlier, often commented humorously on having a "free counselling session" or how "it was good to let it all out". Other social researchers have noted the uncomfortable position they came to occupy through performing a 'therapeutic' role while conducting narrative interviews. This has centred on the similarities between therapeutic practices and narrative methodologies in encouraging people to 'express themselves'; issues of responsibility felt by the researcher in being the catalyst for stressful situations and not being formally trained to take on a therapeutic role (see Birch & Miller, 2000). While I can relate to these feelings, I did not encounter any instances of extreme distress therefore the initial sense of guilt I experienced was overridden by a sense of relief when interviewees expressed feelings of 'comfort' at being able to voice 'their story'/ views without being judged. In addition, the latter point poses an interesting dilemma for the researcher who is also an active social being and there were several instances where the honesty of my interviewees (which for my research purposes I wanted and greatly appreciated) did upset or anger me. For instance, views that questioned the 'authentic' position of ethnic minority groups in Britain (e.g. see pg 236) did affect me as a British Asian. However, it was important for my purpose of collecting thoughts and perceptions to not react and remain

neutral which although I achieved, was not always an easy or comfortable process for me.

Related to these points, certain concerns need to be highlighted which largely centre on 'interviewer effect'. While the biographical method seeks to minimize this, in practice this is not always possible. As Edwards states:

"It must be recognized that the researcher is not simply a straightforward receptacle for the views of others. The researcher is a "variable" in the interview process in several ways" (Edwards, 1992: 185).

Firstly, interviewer effect may be increased by the very nature of the biographical interview. The very personal nature of this type of interviewing involves the respondent 'narrating' his/her story to a stranger. Therefore, how the interviewer makes the respondent feel and in turn how the respondent perceives the interviewer become of crucial importance in determining the nature of the biography that is offered.

Secondly, as indicated earlier, many of the 'youth of Asian origin' were forthcoming on issues of 'race' and culture, often entering into considerable detail about their experiences and feelings about being a racialized minority in Britain. In addition, a number of them asked about my ethnic origins and expressed feeling comfortable in speaking honestly as being Asian myself I would understand their point of view. While on the one hand, this reflects a degree of feeling comfortable with the interviewer, at the same time, it also meant that explanation/detail was only entered into after some probing. Therefore, some of the interviewees would assume that I understood certain instances (e.g. cultural expectations; Hindi words) by virtue of my British Asian status and hence would elaborate only after being probed. Also, in some instances, I was asked if I agreed with what the respondent had said or was asked to share my experiences, which I was happy to do and felt it important to do, on a level of mutual respect. This process of 'reciprocity' has also been

seen as an important feature of feminist methodology to reduce the power imbalance between the researcher and the interviewee and more instrumentally, a greater amount of information is expected to be offered (Edwards, 1992).

Personal experiences while interviewing have been such that it seems impossible to say that being a British Asian had *no effect* on the process of securing and conducting interviews with British Asians and constitutes an important 'reflexivity' point. This issue constitutes a controversial area of debate with the idea that, for example, women should interview women; ethnic minorities interview ethnic minorities and so on (see Bowes, 1996/Web source for further insight into these debates). While there may be validity in these claims, and I felt that my identification as a young person and/or female and/or British Asian was beneficial at different points of the interview process, it is also important to note that other variables are influential more generally regarding interviewing. For instance, issues of class, language, age and so on within gender and ethnic groups that can make assumptions such as those made some time ago by Oakley cited below, simplistic:

"Being a woman means that the researcher can personally identify with the women she interviews and the women identify with her, so that...personal involvement is more than dangerous bias - it is the condition under which people come to know each other and to admit others into their lives" (Oakley, 1982: 58).

In addition, more seemingly minute details may have influenced interviewee perceptions of me and therefore affected the types of views/narratives offered which go beyond, for example, sharing a common gender, ethnicity or age group. In other words, when I approached potential interviewees and later conducted interviews with them, I (although on reflection, not consciously) was dressed in my 'normal, everyday' attire which largely consists of jeans and a top. As I was carrying out research with British youth groups who I had accessed in popular cultural settings, this could be taken as a means for

commonality across ethnicity and indeed many of the interviewees were similarly dressed. However, it would be interesting to note if wearing a different attire (e.g. sari) would produce different responses, especially in view of the territorial perception of Asian dress/style that emerges in many of the narratives (e.g. see pg 233).

To acknowledge a reflexive position throughout this research has been crucial as my own sense of Self, experiences, views and perceptions have formed an integral part of this study. For instance, from choosing this particular area to research (see pg 13) to gaining relatively easy access to respondents, right up to the analysis of various data and in forming conclusions. Therefore, while effort has been made to conduct the research from a level of detachment and professional research dictates, my own subjective positioning and implication in many of the issues raised during this research in terms of being a 'young British Asian woman', has made this research more than an academic study.

Finally, the particular context of the whole interview situation is important. No matter which method is used, the interview remains an artificial situation and the contextual dynamics always have an important effect. This may be exacerbated by the biographical method, which through the collection of life histories, attempts to recall the past from the standpoint of the present. Respondents may be prone to 'glorifying' or choosing to talk about parts of their lives that present them in a favourable light or that they feel is in conjunction with research aims. Therefore the impact of the interview situation itself is as important as interviewer effect on the type of findings that are gathered (McNeill, 1990).

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Summary

Semi-structured interviews were considered the most appropriate method for interviewing media producers/representatives as it allowed for specific context of time constraints.

Biographical interviews were considered the most productive and sensitive method for exploring young people's experiences while enabling them to have considerable control over the interview situation. These were analysed using a constructivist grounded theory approach that enabled themes emerging from the data to be identified while acknowledging my role as researcher in the findings. A reflexive and reciprocal position has been acknowledged throughout this research. A brief of each youth narrative is provided on the next page and interviewee profiles and interview examples (producer/consumer) are included in the Appendix.

Biographical Interviewee Synopsis

What follows below is an individual brief of the 20 youths who took part in the study, based on their personal narratives given at the time of meeting. As highlighted earlier, in the interests of privacy, pseudonyms have been used. To avoid reinforcing essentialist and binary categories, they are presented here in terms of alphabetical order, as follows:-

1. Akshay

Akshay is 30yrs old, married with a two year old son and is a self employed accountant, living and working in West London. He is of Indian origin and identifies as Asian. His narrative is largely constructed around 'race' and is a defensive one in relation to having experienced "attacks" from childhood. For instance, he grew up in a suburb that he describes as 'fundamentally racist' and explains how he continued to feel 'attacked' in adult life. This is related to his own as well as his friends/family's racial-cultural identity. These attacks, be they in terms of racist taunts at school, physical violence or discrimination at work are presented as reasons for being suspicious of and not feeling comfortable in British society.

2. Andrew

Andrew is a 28yr old publishing executive, born and brought up in Yorkshire and identifies as British. He has lived in London since coming to university 10yrs ago and is currently sharing a flat with two 'Asian friends' he has known since university. Andrew's narrative is largely centred on the importance of these university formed friendships to his life. However, latent aspects highlight a sense of discomfort and suspicion at being, "the only white person" in his social group, resulting in a need to 'know' about and participate in Asian culture as much as possible, largely for self preservation.

3. Anil

Anil is a 26yr old secondary school teacher of Indian origin, born and brought up in South London, who describes himself as Asian. He currently lives at home with his family and is engaged to Kathy, an

English woman, on the basis of which neither side of the family is happy. This is the thread that runs through Anil's narrative, causing him to reflect on his own 'natural' expectations of sharing common ground and solidarity with other Asians and non-whites in general. However, his lived experiences have complexified this dictum in favour of negotiated relations and identities that are based on human traits of "personality, love, character" etc as opposed to 'race', culture, religion etc.

4. Anjie

Anjie is a 28yr old IT recruitment officer who now lives in North London with her fiancé Anthony who is from Italy. Her narrative is constructed around the considerable influence her birth and upbringing (in Devon, where her parents run a holiday lodge) has had on her personality, perceptions and behaviour. This is presented as a racially and culturally insular time, where her daily interactions were only with 'white people'. This is contrasted with her sudden 'exposure to difference' when coming to university in London. Although, having now resided in London for approx 10yrs, feelings of discomfort, fear and negotiations of difference, (in particular 'colour difference') emerge as dominant and latent features of her narrative. This becomes intrinsically related to her identification as English.

5. Ayesha

Ayesha is a single, 19yr old beauty therapist who has been working and living in Central London for two years with a group of flatmates. She is of Pakistani origin and describes herself as Asian. She was born and brought up in West London where she lived with her parents (who own a grocery store) and her older brother (a trainee lawyer) up until the age of 16yrs old. Her narration revolves around several aspects of personal identity be that in national, cultural and ethnicity terms: her role as a daughter; her role as a friend and her role as a beauty therapist. These all come to converge on and at times disrupt and constrain her sense of "personal freedom."

6. Carla

Carla is a 30yr old lawyer who describes herself as British. She has been living with Craig for two years, who is also a lawyer working in the same firm in North London. Her narrative highlights a personal struggle in coming to terms with an unplanned pregnancy (amidst career pressures and advancement) coupled with her partner's desire to have children, reinforced by societal/age pressures. What emerges through her narrative is a sense of "having to submerge" her career and lifestyle needs for her partner's. This is coupled with gradually feeling excluded from what has been 'their world' for so long in favour of an 'isolated' world.

7. Charlene

Charlene is a 20yr old bar worker who describes herself as British. She is in a relationship with Martin, who is a university student. Her narrative is constructed around feelings of exclusion in terms of "not really fitting in" to her social group, which consists of her friends from the bar and Martin's friends from university. She presents her sense of exclusion from the first in racial and cultural terms, highlighting her 'whiteness' as cause of her outsider status, where she cannot identify with her 'black friends' racialized experiences. The second sense of exclusion comes from not physically and mentally sharing the same space as Martin and his university friends, where she often feels and is made to feel like "a thicko." What comes to the fore through her narration is a pressure to prove 'her merit' in both instances.

8. Daniel

Daniel is a 'sometimes single', 18yr old DJ based in South London, where his parents have owned a cafe for over 20yrs and it is this social space (above which they also live) that constitutes the foundation of Daniel's biography. It is here that he, at a very young age, viewed his parents interacting harmoniously, on a day to day basis, with people of 'different colours and cultures'. He presents this as positively shaping his perceptions of people, which was strengthened later when he began

working there on a part time, then full time basis upon leaving school at 16yrs. He also credits this social space as enabling him to enter the music arena via contact with a group of musicians who frequented the cafe that led to his first DJ-ing slot.

9. David

David is a 25yr old, married civil servant, who identifies as English. His narration provides a chronological account of his "happy life" from family and education through to his adult personal and working life. At the same time, implicit within this there emerges a sense of someone who has always felt the need to 'compete' for everything. For instance, from "getting more toys" than his brothers did as a child to "wining over a friend" for his now wife's affections and "fighting hard" to ensure promotion at work. Through his narrative, this competitive streak becomes intrinsically linked to an assertion of masculinity that is exacerbated if those perceived to be weaker / "less worthy" than him (e.g. women, those not born in England or those less educated) are successful.

10. Jameel

Jameel is a 29yr old fitness instructor of Pakistani origin, who describes himself as Asian and lives with his girlfriend in East London. This has caused considerable problems within his family, who he now "hardly sees". Jameel's narrative is constructed around the need for self-expression and self-representation, which he also extends to Asian cultural representation. This seems to stem from childhood experiences of growing up in a family of "big personalities" and at school, other boys were "the leaders". Consequently what emerges is a sense of his needs and voice never being heard which now in his adult life he is trying to rectify by, in his words, "doing and saying what I want".

11. Julia

Julia is a single, 18yr old hairdresser living in East London with her mother, whose hairdressing salon she also works in. Julia's narrative

centres around feelings of sadness and resentment at her parents divorce when she was 13yrs old and in particular 'the cause' as she puts it, which is presented as "the black woman who stole my dad". This situation serves to underpin a narration that expresses an assertion of Englishness coupled with considerable hostility towards 'black people'. Throughout her narrative, Julia speaks in terms of what "everyone knows about them". Significantly, this 'knowledge' does not come from direct personal interactions, rather constitutes information gleaned from stereotypical media representations. This serves to substantiate her already negative viewpoint.

12. Julian

Julian is a 21yrs old, single, Masters student in economics and has lived in London with his parents and brother all his life. He identifies himself as British. Julian's narrative is constructed around current specific family circumstances that involve his brother's relationship with an Asian woman and the problems of acceptance his parents have with this. What emerges through his narrative is a contrast between the "liberal, open minded values" he assumed his parents had and the "horrible prejudice" they are now displaying. This has created a sense of shock and loss for him and his brother; with whom his own relationship has strengthened amidst the disintegration of what he had always felt were unbreakable parental-child ties.

13. Kathleen

Kathleen is a single, 24yr old Masters student in art history, who lives at home with her parents and sister. Her father is an accountant, her mother has taken early retirement from her civil service position and sister is also a Masters student in West London. Kathleen also works weekends as a barmaid at a club in West London that regularly hosts an 'Asian music night' (something that she "loves") and which is where I met her. The focus of Kathleen's narrative is in terms of the constant growth and nurturing of her Self identity. The Self is presented as lacking in terms of her sometimes ambivalent participation and experience of Otherness.

Throughout her narrative, this is consistently presented in terms of greater enrichment to and 'difference' from Self, personified by the difference of 'Asian culture' from and to her British Self.

14. Mia

Mia is a 27yr old, secondary school art and design teacher, who describes herself as Indian. She has recently got married to her boyfriend from university, Rahul, a civil engineer; also Indian and they are renting a flat in South London. The dominant aspect of Mia's narrative revolves around her desire and need for originality and authenticity in all aspects of her life, from interior design to culture. However, latent aspects point to some contradictions between cultural expectations and perceptions of what is "authentic Asian culture" to and for Mia. A salient feature is the way 'authenticity' becomes compromised in her daily life for reasons of practicality. It is the personal reconciliation of this tension that forms an underpinning current of her biography.

15. Rajesh

Rajesh is a single, 19yr old, taking a gap year between college and university, during which time he intends to travel to his 'roots' (i.e. Delhi in India) with some friends. Throughout his narrative he describes himself as Indian, however his narrative points to a rollercoaster of changing emotions. This ranges from early denial and embarrassment at being "the only different one" at school to self-conflict and more recently acknowledgement of and interest in his "cultural origins." This latter feeling appears to have come about through attending a cosmopolitan college and the high profile of 'Asian culture' in the media, primarily through films and music.

16. Raveena

Raveena is a 30yr old and I quote "actively dating Asian Sikh", who following degrees in business and marketing, has worked as a marketing manager for the last five years. She has recently bought and moved into her own flat in South London. She comes from a family of 4 brothers, the

elder two of which are married and living abroad, while the two younger to her live at home with her parents, both factory workers in South London. Raveena's narration is constructed around feelings and experiences of gender and colour based exclusion within her family and 'community' as well as racial and cultural exclusion within wider British society. In relation to both, she positions herself as "an outsider".

17. Riza

Riza is a 25yr old fashion designer (of Pakistani origin) who up until five years previously had lived in Birmingham all her life with her parents and then her husband. Following the breakdown of her marriage and subsequent divorce, she came to London "to reclaim" herself, where she now works as a self-employed fashion designer. Her narrative is constructed around the quest to release herself from cultural and gender based expectations and to be able to express her sense of Self and creativity. These aims are being realised through achieving her "fashion designing dream". It is through this avenue that she sees it as her 'right' to "fuse cultures" together in reflection of her 'British Asian status' and identification.

18. Salman

Salman is a single, 24yr old property developer, who has been working in his father's business for the last 4yrs. This is presented largely as an enforced state of affairs following his 'hasty exit' from a university media degree. He is of Indian origin and describes himself as British Asian. Salman's narrative presents the Self as living according to a fatalistic and naturalistic state, even though he is not necessarily always satisfied with situations. Thus, he lives and works with his family because that's the "way it worked out" and he's Asian because that's just "the way it is" and discrimination is part of British society so "what can we do".

19. Sam

Sam is an 18yr old electrician, currently in a relationship, and lives at home with his parents. Sam's narrative is constructed around feelings of

inadequacy and frustration that are linked to leaving school without any academic qualifications at 16yrs old. This is coupled with half heartedly taking on a trade that he has little interest in, but ensures he has money in his pocket. Although as he points out on a few occasions, is less than his girlfriend earns. Through his narrative, these feelings become projected as resentment towards many of his school peers, who although he still interacts with regularly, have gone on to further education. The fact that many of these people are Asian seems to form a crucial context to the remainder of his narrative. This asserts legitimate and illegitimate belonging to British society based on origin and his own identification as English.

20. Shalini

Shalini is a 20yr old, single, university student studying psychology, who describes herself as Indian. She was born in and has lived in Leyton, East London all her life with her parents (both teachers) and two older sisters who are now both married professionals living nearby. Her narrative is constructed around experience of racisms (both individual and institutional) in various realms of life, from school and locality to an awareness of racial injustices more generally. Crucially, as with many of the youths of Asian origin, these are referred to on a historically constructed level. These experiences centre the dominant features of Shalini's narrative in terms of an "us non-whites against those whites" dynamic. However latent aspects of her narration also point to a lived reality in terms of identity ambivalences and contradictions.

Chapter 7: Visual Discourses

As highlighted through the introductory discussion, a central aim of this thesis is to explore how the media make use of visual discourses to construct racialized and orientalized representations of 'the Other'. A related question is to consider to what extent those constructed as 'the Other' have made use of visual discourses to deconstruct these images and reconstruct them on their own terms. In order to explore these areas, I have collected several visual discourses in the form of images and words relating to 'Asian culture' from 'British mainstream' and 'British Asian' magazines, over a period of four years (1998-2002). It should be noted that the disparity in the number of 'mainstream' and 'minority' magazines used is simply a reflection of the greater number of the former that was available during the time of research. The sources used are as follows:

British 'Mainstream'
Company
Hello!
Marie Claire
Now
Sunday Times Style magazine
Tatler

British 'Asian'
Asian Woman
Eastern Eye magazine
Snoop

These magazines consist largely of women's fashion and/or lifestyle magazines that were not actively sought out, rather were a result of a personal interest in such magazines, therefore included those that I had read and archived during my leisure time. It was through this activity that ideas for my study formulated, and my leisure pursuit became a rich research source. While numerous images and pieces of written text were amassed from the listed (and more) magazines during the period, my aim

was not in conducting a quantifiable content analysis, hence a small selection of pertinent discourses were analysed. These consisted of 4 images (2 from mainstream magazines and 2 from British Asian magazines) and 24 pieces of written text (comprising of 8 pieces of discourse from mainstream magazines and 16 from British Asian magazines; the greater number of the latter simply being a reflection of the larger number of discourses regarding Asianness in an Asian–oriented magazine). These were chosen on the basis of their interest and relevance to issues of Asian cultural representation. A small amount was analysed largely due to space limitations and in order to remain as focused and thorough as possible. In any case, it should be remembered that while these chosen images and textual fragments are not claimed to be representative of all magazines or the print media in general, they are presented as examples of the visual discourses that I came across and in some cases are typical of the respective magazine and the magazine's discourse position.

The visual images have been scanned and reproduced as they appeared in the magazine source, with the exception of size, which has been cropped for presentation in my thesis, although the original image was presented to interviewees for viewing (as shall be discussed in Chapter 8). The written pieces of text have been rewritten in this thesis, word for word as the original and every effort has been made to pay attention to original font size, style etc in description at least, if not appearance. Once again the original pieces of text were presented to the interviewees, although they were cut out from their original magazine context and glued individually to separate pieces of card, for easy viewing. The methodological tools that have been chosen for analysis of these visual discourses are in terms of *semiotics* for magazine photographic images and *discourse analysis* for magazine written text, although of course there is some straddling involved. What follows below is a succinct background to these approaches combined with an explanation of why these methods were chosen and how I have chosen to interpret / apply them to the present study, beginning with a discussion of Semiotics.

1. Semiotics

Theoretical Background

Semiotics can be traced back to the individual works of the linguist, Saussure and perhaps less referred to, the philosopher, Pierce. In terms of the former, the basic premise involves a 'science of signs' where language constitutes a *system* consisting of 'signs', which themselves are made up of two unifying elements of meaning. These are a *signifier* (e.g. pair of jeans), which refers to the form in terms of word, image, photo etc and a *signified* (e.g. casual, trendy) that points to the associated concepts or sound. Both point to a *referent* which is the object in the real world. The important point is that there isn't a necessary, natural relationship between a particular signifier and its signified. This knowledge comes from our socialization into a particular cultural society, which constructs a system of differences upon which understandings of what something is and is not are based (Bignell, 2002). These basic elements of Saussure's theory of language are relevant to my research aims in terms of challenging the 'natural' state of language as simply a medium that reflects reality and instead looking at the ways in which language actively constructs meaning, identities, differences and realities in cultures and societies. However Pierce's model involves a more extensive framework of signs (e.g. iconic signs) that goes beyond Saussure's simplistic dichotomy. This involves the ability of signs to continuously build on each other to create further meaning. Therefore meaning always involves an endless process of interpretation as opposed to a fixed and universal meaning (Gottdiener,1995).

Building on these ideas in the mid twentieth century and of particular importance to the present study, is the work of Roland Barthes who applied and reworked Saussure's sign system to studying diverse aspects of French culture, including wrestling, wine, photography, fashion and magazines (e.g. see Barthes, 1973). I have made use of his main ideas for my analysis of magazine images. Barthes views reality as being

constructed by the dominant powers in society, who through cultural artefacts or 'signs' portray a way of being that appears 'natural' although it actually represents a historical construction. This constitutes the making of what Barthes termed *myths*, "a type of speech" (Barthes, 1973) that masks and perpetuates the power hierarchies in society. This notion of myth can be seen then as a form of ideology that also links in with what has been discussed in relation to orientalism in Chapter 4, in terms of a socially constructed reality that is presented as 'natural' and 'common knowledge'. As such, the power relations in society, for instance, in terms of 'race', gender and class become normalized. As Nichols states:

"...ideology uses the fabrication of images and the processes of representations to persuade us that how things are is how they ought to be and that the place provided for us is the place we ought to have" (Nichols, 1981: 1).

An often cited example of this comes from Barthes' analysis of the front cover of a French magazine (*Paris-Match*) which consists of a photograph of a black soldier saluting the French flag, produced in the late sixties during the latter stages of the Algerian war of Independence against France. Barthes identifies the black soldier giving the salute as the signifier and its signified as the mix of Frenchness and militariness and notes that there is a presence of the signified through the signifier (Barthes, 1973) which together form the sign. This constitutes reading the *denotative* message or *first order* sign, in other words, a descriptive reading of what is actually seen. Crucially, Barthes takes this reading further in terms of identifying a *second order* sign which holds a *connotative* message, a higher level of *mythical* meaning, that of the naturalness and fairness of French imperiality. In other words:

"The French Empire? Its just a fact: look at this good Negro who salutes like one of our own boys" (Barthes, 1973: 124).

Significantly and illustrative of the complexity of the issue is the fact that this is a photograph, seemingly capturing a moment in time and (as highlighted in the introductory discussion) invokes the perception of

photographs as mere mirrors on reality. This is another facet that serves to naturalize the 'myth' by being able to invoke the image in a literal sense and makes 'myth' difficult to criticize because its signifier can point back to the simple denotative meaning, for example, an individual soldier saluting the French flag (Allen, 2003). In other specific works on photography, Barthes does delve deeper into this complexity of deciphering myths from photographs (see Barthes, 1986) however to enter into further discussion of these ideas would prove lengthy and inappropriate for the present study that deals with magazine images. That is 'moments in time' that have clearly been *constructed* for the camera (therefore are more akin to iconic images) where the referent is to an extent still created, as opposed to naturally existing in that state, no matter how much the image is presented as 'natural'.

The important point to note regarding Barthes' notion of 'myth' is that it doesn't serve to suppress meaning, rather to take hold of a sign and empty it of history and meaning, turning it into an empty form. Therefore the black soldier on the magazine cover is presented without his history and instead becomes a weapon to aid the French Imperial project (Barthes, 1973). The underlying point provided by Barthes' semiological analysis is that objects and events always signify more than themselves and are caught up in systems of representation which add meaning to them.

Method

I have chosen to base my analysis of magazine images on the above ideas of semiotics, as this aims to address the nature of representations and offers tools for dissecting an image and tracing its relation to broader systems of meaning (Rose, 2001) all of which are highly relevant to my study. At this point there is a need to clarify that while I have conducted my analysis according to the basic ideas of semiotics, I have not adhered to a rigid model of calculation or produced intricate diagrams which many structuralist semiotical analyses have done (for example, Goldman,

1992). This is largely because in my view this is a mechanical way of approaching the dynamism of a visual image. However, I have attempted to look at the implicit conventions and meanings behind the specific visual image and in line with Barthes' application of semiotics in particular, establish the ideological/mythical functions of the 'signs' embodied within and around the image. Therefore I have paid overall attention to the following themes:

- *What and Whose reality is being constructed, represented and excluded?*
- *How does the image seek to naturalize its own perspectives?*
- *What assumptions are being made about the viewer/consumer?*
- *Are there visible and invisible signs of racial, cultural difference?*
- *How do people differ in their interpretation of the sign?*

It should be noted that in my analysis of visual images, I have not explored the more technical elements involved in the production of magazine photographs (e.g. what type of camera was used etc). However, I have paid attention to the 'compositionality' of each image (e.g. content, colour, light and arrangement of elements) that have been said to influence interpretations (Hodge and Kress, 1988). In highlighting this spatial organization of the images, I have focused on aspects such as: *what parts of the image are fore grounded and what settings are used?* While drawing on semiotical principles, I have adhered to a simple framework of analysis that has involved:

1. *Identifying the signs, visual and linguistic, including what are known as syntagmatic signs (those that gain meaning from signs that surround them in a still image).*
2. *What the signs appear to be signifying?*
3. *Exploring their connections to each other and wider systems of meaning, highlighting the articulation of ideology and mythology.*
4. *Which social myths and systems of differences does the image call upon and are these reinforced or challenged?*

Overall, I have been interested in exploring the image as a site for the construction and representation of social difference and the power relations these are embedded in and that may be challenged by particular ways of seeing. However, it should be noted that this analytical process is not motivated by any claim to having unveiled 'the real' or a 'universal truth' which has been noted as a limitation of conventional structural semiotical analyses (discussed further below). Rather, I have provided semiotically guided observations based on my interpretation and 'my way of seeing' which is inevitably embedded in personal social experience and knowledges. I have attempted to engage in thorough and interesting interpretations, while making an effort to balance this subjective approach by gathering information on what other people see in these images (as explained in the next chapter). In addition, I have reproduced the images in this thesis for readers to make their own interpretations. To quote Stuart Hall:

"..it is worth emphasising that there is no single or 'correct' answer to the question, 'What does this image mean?'...Since there is no law which can guarantee that things will have 'one true meaning' or that meanings won't change over time, work in this area is bound to be interpretative..."
(cited in Rose, 2001: 2)

Limitations

As with all methods, semiotics has attracted a number of criticisms and exposed its limitations, which although I have tried to overcome largely through my loose application and reflexive use of it, can be identified as follows:

1. The first criticism is largely aimed at the more conventional structural strand of semiology, following Saussure, which seeks scientific status and tends to assume certain pre-existing structures as given. Representations are viewed in system-based, ahistorical and fixed binary terms, which ignore the complexity of individual texts and subjective responses (Pieterse, 1992).

As has been mentioned earlier (see Chapter 3) there are limits to this view when studying the fluid and subjective nature of culture, hence there is a need to look not just at the 'image itself' with the aim of exposing the underlying system. Rather, the image needs to be viewed in conjunction with social practices and relations of production and interpretation, which is what I have attempted to do in this study, albeit with a particular focus on the latter.

While structuralist notions are important, I have tried to go beyond its rigidity in my own research and abandon the 'scientific' premise and the idea of a 'final' structural end that can be reached. The aim is to approach language and culture not as a closed system but to apply these ideas in a more fluid and interpretive way. Barthes himself appeared to do this in acknowledging the multiple or polysemic nature of signs and meanings (Barthes, 1973).

2. Secondly, and related to the above, some conventional semiotical analyses have sought to elevate the semiotician to a privileged position as having recourse to the 'ultimate truth', while portraying the general public as passive dupes (e.g. Goldman, 1992). This is largely due to a non-reflexive strand that again privileges the idea of 'system' above individual. However, the post-structuralist strand of semiotics (where my study may be located) emphasises that cultural texts cannot be reduced to single, fixed and unitary meanings by either analysts or social subjects. Rather there may be contradictory subject positions within contradictory texts, therefore highlighting a shift from supposedly scientific and objective methodology to rhetorical and relative (Hall,1997 ; Slater, 2004).

It is therefore also important to note that if we accept the premise that all knowledge depends on signs, then all knowledge is vulnerable to semiological reinterpretation and absorption into cultural industries (Barthes,1973; Allen, 2003). Barthes acknowledges how demystification itself has become a widespread discourse and assimilated by the general culture (see Allen, 2003). This can be seen in the fact that many

advertisers are semioticians who play on meanings and myths in order to increase the effectiveness of messages and the myth itself under a veneer of 'irony' (Bignell, 2002).

3. Combining the above two critiques and causing the "undoing of formal structural semiotics and the structuralist enterprise itself" (Gottdeiner, 1995) is the deconstructionist critique presented by the philosopher, Derrida. According to Derrida's position, there can be no stable structures or sign systems with a centre point or a transcendental signified (a sign that doesn't depend upon other signs for its meaning) that can be scientifically analysed by semiologists due to the never ending play of meaning. From this premise came the deconstructionist attack on Saussure's model of a simplistic unity of signs as signifier and signified and therefore the implication of leading to one, true transcendental signified (Derrida, 1976).

4. Fourthly, as with qualitative methods in general, questions of representativeness, reliability and replicability have been applied to semiotics (see Slater, 2004). I do not make any claims to fulfilling these criteria nor think such quantitative concerns are necessarily appropriate for a qualitative oriented analysis. However, as already mentioned, I have attempted to go beyond my subjective semiotic readings by gathering varied reader interpretations.

5. Finally, something that became increasingly obvious through the course of my research was the different contexts that come to bear when analyzing any visual discourse, where they are separated from the real environment in which they exist. In other words there may be significant difference between analyzing an image with the use of certain tools (i.e. semiotics) no matter how loosely applied, repeatedly and alone than without the aid of such tools and under time/space constraints. With this in mind, it may have been interesting to note different or not so different interpretations arising from differential viewing contexts. For instance,

viewing images within a magazine in leisure time compared to viewing selected images under some degree of constraint.

In addition, it is useful to keep in mind that analyses of representations themselves carry or imply certain forms of representation and therefore analyses of stereotypes may themselves serve to essentialize, therefore producing new stereotypes regarding 'the third world' or 'Western culture', which the analyst is implicated in (Pieterse, 1992).

2. Discourse Analysis

The term discourse can refer to detailed analysis of the use of language in speech or text, with concentration on talk/text as social practices and the resources that are drawn upon to enable those practices (Potter,1996). However, discourse also refers to verbal, written and visual mediums as practices of language that seek to construct meaning and ways of thinking through representations of knowledge encased within relations of power. Therefore discourse is a state of knowledge that will appear across a range of texts and as forms of conduct at a number of different areas within society, a process known as *intertextuality.* This idea challenges the viewing of a text as an isolated entity or certain fixity, through emphasizing the absorption and transformation of other texts in its formation (see Orr, 2003 for a discussion of intertextuality in relation to Barthes and Kristeva, amongst others). Whenever discursive events refer to the same object, share the same style and support a strategy, they are said to belong to the same *discursive formation* (see Hall, 1997). In this sense, discourse as a form of social action questions the assumption of language as a transparent and neutral medium, instead (as in the semiotical vein already discussed) language is seen to be constructive and constitutive of social life. However, unlike some structurally guided semiotical analyses, discourse analysts are less motivated by establishing 'the real truth' hidden under the text and more with the

organization of discourse in terms of *how* truths emerge, *how* social realities are constructed and the consequences of these in terms of power infused social relations (Potter and Wetherell, 2001).

Theoretical background

The basic principles of discourse analysis can be traced back to the work of critical theorist, Foucault who was concerned with the production of knowledge and meaning, not through language but through discourse. Thus the focus was on *discourse as a system of representation* and its influence on how ideas are put into practice and used to regulate the conduct of others that may be seen in prisons or mental asylums (Foucault, 1988 ; Hall, 1997). At the base of constructionist theories of meaning and representation is the idea that physical things and actions exist (i.e. 'the real world') but they only take on meaning and become objects of knowledge *within discourse.* Therefore it is the *discourse about things* as opposed to things in themselves that produces knowledge, an idea that is clearly invoked through Said's Orientalism (1978). As discussed earlier (see Chapter 4) Said echoes Foucault in the sense that a discourse produces, through different practices of representation (e.g. literature or parliamentary speeches) a racialized knowledge of the Other that is implicated in the operations of power, exercised through imperial structures (Hall, 1997). However, it has been noted that Said distances himself from a wholly Foucauldian position of believing discourse to be by itself the generator of power relations, by arguing that the material structures of imperialism both underpinned and were underpinned by the discursive formation of orientalism (Macdonald, 2003).

Foucault's analysis is geared towards discussing how knowledge about a topic acquires authority and takes on the status of 'truth' at a historical moment and by the same token certain 'truths' acquire an almost sacred, unquestioned status as *regimes of truth.* Hence the application of discourse through institutional technologies (e.g. the print media) and the effectiveness of power/knowledge as regulating meaning is seen to be

more important than the question of its 'truth.' The crucial point in Foucault's conception is that power isn't imposed from top to bottom but *circulates* therefore operating in every sphere of life and is not only repressive but can be productive (e.g. in accumulating forms of knowledge). Here, both the powerful and the powerless are caught up, though not on equal terms. Foucault also claims that a different discourse will arise at a later historical moment, superseding the existing one and therefore opening up a new discursive formation, with new conceptions to regulate social practices in different ways. Therefore things are 'true' only within specific historical contexts and there is assumed to be a radical break between one historical period and another. However in my view this becomes questionable when applied to areas of cultural representation, as it has the effect of obscuring the fact that so called 'different' discourses may not necessarily mean a change in meaning or effect. For example, in charting representations of 'Asian culture' in its early orientalist depictions to the modern day, have representations really changed to such an extent that a radical break in ideologies or effects has occurred? Material constituting the remainder of this thesis would suggest not. Rather, in my view, despite different historical contexts, certain depictions and portrayals have transcended and as Said argues in Orientalism, have built on previous catalogues of knowledge. Indeed, Macdonald (2003) has argued that the media build on pre-existing and competing discourses as opposed to inventing anything new.

From the above basic principles, there have grown a number of divergent strands falling under the umbrella of discourse analysis, based within different schools of thought, for instance, conversation analysis; sociology etc (for a detailed discussion see Wetherell et al 2001). While discussion of these is not entered into here, one branch is of particular interest and relevance to my study, that of *Critical Discourse Analysis* (CDA), which although housing its own internal deviations (see Fairclough and Wodak, 1997) I would like to briefly discuss in terms of a general overview.

Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical discourse analysis involves understanding the nature of social power and dominance in terms of structures and minds and with particular focus on the subtle, routine forms of text and talk that appear rational and natural. One major function of dominant discourse is to manufacture consensus and legitimacy of dominance through hegemony (discussed in Chapter 3) in terms of influencing minds in such a way that they act in the interests of the dominant out of 'free will' (Van Dijk, 2001). This critical stance then is specifically concerned with abuses of power by those who exercise power (e.g. media producers or 'elites') and play a pivotal role in the reproduction of racism through producing 'elite discourse' (Van Dijk, 2001). In this sense, Critical Discourse Analysis seeks to connect texts to their widest possible socio-structural contexts.

From this, it can be seen how the emphasis of Critical Discourse Analysis differs from Foucault's principle of the circulatory nature of power and the absence of power in 'anybody's hands' (Foucault, 1980) to a greater focus on the dominance of power by certain groups. As such, Critical Discourse Analysis takes a materialist stance and is based on assumptions of disharmony, conflict and power differentials between populations and groups and on the assumption that language use reflects, reproduces, and changes these social phenomena. Crucially, ideologies are seen to emanate from discourses that serve to construct knowledge and reality according to a dominant agenda, all the while clothed in a 'natural' and unproblematic manner (V Dijk, 1998). This again is what Said illustrated through orientalism as a discourse (see Chapter 4) and Barthes via his notion of 'myths' (see Chapter 7). This emphasis on ideology marks a further point of difference with Foucault. He rejected the concept based on the notion that implicit within an ideological critique is recourse to a pre-existing, pure 'truth' which is situated elsewhere. This runs contrary to Foucault's principle of 'truth' being produced within and known through discourse (Foucault, 1980).

Method

Discourse analysis was seen to be the most appropriate approach for analyzing magazine texts due to its focus on the exercise of 'power' through discourse and as such "discourse as the instrument of the social construction of reality" (Van Leeuwen, 1993) and it's ability to "produce and reproduce hegemonic and discriminatory social relations" (Bishop and Jaworski, 2003) through ideologies. I have made use of the basic principles of discourse analysis with a particular emphasis on critical discourse analysis. Therefore, I have attempted to explore the power of 'elite discourse' through media representations while also attending to the heterogeneity and inequalities within 'media elites' (e.g. ethnic minority media producers) and therefore access to power (e.g. see pg 48). I have also explored the possibility of challenges to 'elite discourse' through the power of the consumer/reader to resist hegemonic ideologies (e.g. see pg 187).

From the sample of magazines listed previously (pg 123) various pieces of discourse were chosen, not according to any rigid calculation but according to their relevance to 'Asian culture' in some form; their ability to evoke a response and on the simple basis of interest. I focused on choosing and analyzing a selection of *headings and/or sub-headings* only of editorial copy, mainly because going through the magazine, these are what grabs the eye and focuses initial attention, as they are designed to, due to a larger print and special font etc making them distinct from the rest of the text. Certainly through personal experience of reading magazines, this determines whether to read the entire associated article or not, all factors that have been noted elsewhere, particularly in relation to newspaper headlines (Kress and Leeuwen,1996 ; V Dijk, 1988). In addition, it was felt that due to their succinct nature, it would be a simpler task to present these to interviewees for response as opposed to lengthy text. For organizational purposes, these pieces of text have been presented in this thesis under subjectively titled themes that reflect their composition (e.g. *'Evoking a colonial past' pg 183).*

However, I acknowledge that in separating the headline from the context of the article, I have prevented utilization of perhaps a multifaceted piece of discourse that may have revealed contradictory and challenging facets of meaning. As various analysts have pointed out, even a small amount of additional information about context can throw into question an initial interpretation of the text (Potter and Wetherell, 2001 ; Tonkiss, 2004). In this sense, I have also perhaps selected those pieces of discourse that 'fit into' my research questions and this does constitute a criticism of discourse analysis in general (see next pg). However, by involving reader responses I have as much as possible provided an arena for gauging alternative interpretations (see Chapter 8). However, I do not make claims on this basis towards representativeness or generalizability as this was not my intention on the basis of a qualitative and interpretive paradigm. Despite this, I have aimed towards achieving internal validity in terms of coherence and a thorough subjective interpretation of my chosen material.

Fairclough's (2001) model of discourse interpretation concentrates on three basic premises which (although focusing on news media) has been adhered to while analysing the chosen pieces of magazine text. These revolve around a 'multifunctional view of texts', namely:

- *Representations*, as in how is the world represented, through modes of language, for example, the use of binary contrasts, absences in the text etc and what ideologies are entwined within this?

- *Identities*, as in what identities are set up for those involved, for instance between writer and reader?

- *Relations*, as in what relationships are constructed between those involved, for instance, is it a formal or informal relationship promoted within the dynamic of writer and reader?

According to Fairclough, this multifunctional approach is also concerned with discourse practices in terms of: the ways in which texts are produced by media workers; the way texts are received and the socio-cultural practices that the discourse forms a part of, which my study aims to explore as far as possible.

Limitations

1. A Foucauldian approach could be argued to collapse too much into discourse which has the effect of neglecting the influence of material, economic and structural factors in the operation of power/knowledge (Hall, 1997) although surely these actively produce discourses. However, the materialist stance of Critical Discourse Analysis overcomes this limitation to a great extent. In addition, the focus on textuality of much discourse analysis has been said to undermine the power of images and misses the point of the media's dominance over contemporary popular culture, in which image and power combine in various ways (Pieterse, 1992). As a corrective to this, it is perhaps useful to operate with a 'multimodal' view of discourse (see Macdonald, 2003) and/or to utilize various approaches in the analysis of text and image, as I have attempted to do in the present study.

2. Regarding Critical Discourse Analysis in particular, Widdowson (1995) points to the selectivity of evidence used in analysis that reflects a biased agenda, which has been acknowledged above in relation to my own research. This falls in line with general criticisms levelled against the approach in terms of it too easily allowing a researcher to uncover findings that he/she wants to find.

3. At the same time, it has also been argued that the approach does not achieve anything that any language user, having insights into their own uses of language, could not say (Barker and Galasinski, 2001). However, implicitly the discourse analyst is elevated to a privileged position to carry out detailed language analysis, by virtue of 'the tool kit' exemplified by

Fairclough's 'model' for instance (pg 137). The importance of and value attached to reader responses of magazine discourse is hoped to counter such notions in the present study, the subject of which constitutes the next chapter.

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Summary

Semiotics was considered the most useful tool for analysis of visual images due to its attention to the manifestation of ideologies through signs and symbols. Further, its post-structural application within a social semiotic approach was seen to overcome weaknesses of conventional structural semiotics that placed limits on agency and subjectivity. This method was substantiated through the use of Discourse Analysis in relation to written text which was seen as particularly useful in highlighting how discourse can serve as a means of maintaining/challenging power relations. Despite their different emphasis, it is my view that both methods are intrinsically linked due to their emphasis on the socially constructed aspects of language. At the same time, the textual concentration of these methods has been widened by also looking at how visual representations are interpreted in the form of reader responses. It is to a discussion of this method that the next chapter concentrates on.

Chapter 8: Reader Responses

Theoretical Background

Following on from the often cited limitation of semiotical and discourse analysis in terms of failing to explore responses to media texts, while just performing a textual analysis and assuming an ideological effect on readers, I have attempted to enrich analysis by involving individual responses. This is because it has been argued that:

"...meaning does not reside within images but is produced at the moment that they are consumed by and circulate among viewers" (Sturken and Cartwright, 2001: 7).

This part of the study then falls into the realm of ideas/research put forward by Hall (1981b), Morley (1992) and Fiske (1989) amongst others that emphasise the power of 'the audience'. For instance, as mentioned earlier new audience studies and reception studies emerged as a challenge to traditional media effects theories which stressed the power of media messages over people, exemplified by theories of the Frankfurt school (see Chapter 3). However, approaches that focus on audiences build on previous models such as 'two step flow' and 'uses and gratifications' that recognize the complex power of the media and media consumers not just as passive dupes but as playing an active role in responses to the media.

Media reception research has suggested that texts do not have unitary meanings but are variously interpreted by different audiences, in terms of their socio-economic make-up and may therefore be different in effects (Fiske, 1989). Therefore I thought it was important and would be interesting to bring the interviewees together with the magazine images and words that I had selected / interpreted in order to gather 'their responses' as opposed to assuming how the consumer receives media produced material. This not only relates to work on audience participation

and consumption but also a general social semiotic understanding where semiology is centrally concerned with the reception of images by audiences (Bal and Bryson, 1991). This contrasts with structuralist strands of semiotics that assume meanings are inherent in the text or to a political economy approach that stresses the over-arching, universal influence of ideological power emanating from media ownership.

A great deal of work in this genre has focused on the way that audiences resist the constructions of reality preferred by the mass media and construct their own oppositional meanings from media texts. In such reception analysis, audiences are seen as *active producers of meaning* as opposed to mere consumers of media meanings (see Fiske, 1989) where they decode media texts in ways which are related to their social and cultural circumstances and the ways that they individually experience those circumstances. As mentioned earlier, a major criticism of such 'bottom-up' approaches to popular culture has been a perhaps unrealistic celebration of the actual power or resistance of audiences (see Chapter 3). This is coupled with an avoidance to engage with the text itself and the forces of media production in which media reception takes place. For such reasons, I have attempted to avoid merely researching responses towards the banal conclusion that we do not all understand things the same way and instead have made use of reader responses in conjunction with individual biographies in order to gain some insight into possible causes and consequences of such differences.

In addition, Hodge and Kress (1988) highlight the importance of production and reception regimes in determining the meaning of visual texts, for instance a change in the context and location, as well as different cultural transmissions of an image, may result in a different meaning being taken from it (as I have indicated on pg 131). Put another way, a naked woman on the cover of a 'top shelf' magazine may be seen as pornography, while a naked woman painted on canvas, hanging in a gallery, is more easily seen as art. Therefore in the context of my study, 'the magazine' suggests light entertainment hence is not to be taken

seriously, which needs to be kept in mind when gauging responses. However, the images were not presented in their 'normal' context of being seen while 'flicking through a magazine' and instead were presented in an artificial interview context.

Stuart Hall's "encoding/decoding" model of communication (1981b) has aimed to unite the areas of media produced text and reader interpretations. Here, the power of the text in terms of media power to set agendas through signs and symbols is focused upon. The significant point being that these only gain meaning within the terms of reference supplied by 'codes' which the audience shares through socialization, with the producers of messages. The crux of Hall's model is that the same image can be encoded in more than one way and similarly the message always contains more than one potential reading or interpretation therefore remains 'polysemic', although a 'preferred' reading is likely to be encoded within the image. This acknowledges audience variability and interpretation in reading/viewing media texts. Audience readings come to be identified in terms of the following:

- *Dominant codes/readings* (imposed by those in control and remain unquestioned by receivers).
- *Negotiated codes/readings* (acknowledgement of dominant interpretations but in some way challenged by receivers).
- *Oppositional codes/readings* (interpretations that operate in resistance to dominant codes and are counter hegemonic, which has been illustrated, for example, through studies of black women television viewers, see for example, Bobo, 1995).

The model has been widely influential in audience studies and a number of television based audience studies have made use of Hall's model in qualitative popular culture studies (e.g. Ang,1989). However, Nightingale (1996) has criticized such studies and the model underpinning them for their definitions of text and discourse that perpetuate research practices

that objectify audiences and refuse them the right to determine research agendas or theoretical analysis.

Method

The gathering of individual responses to the visual discourses of magazines took place on my second meeting with the 20 interviewees. The interviewees were met with separately, as my interest was in gathering individual readings (although on this point see pg 147) and the same process was adhered to in each case, as follows:-

1. From the total amount of 28 visual discourses (images and text) that I analysed, for practical reasons only around half were shown to interviewees. These constituted 4 pictorial images, 4 pieces of text from mainstream and 7 from British Asian magazines. These were given to the interviewee together, with the respondent being asked to choose the order in which they wanted to talk about the visual discourses. They were prompted to describe in detail their personal response to each, including reasons for the nature of ordering.

2. While allowing maximum time for the respondent to 'narrate' their feelings towards each, with gentle probing, a few specific questions were asked, had they not arisen in some way during the course of their responses. These included:

- *If they thought the source was a British 'mainstream' or British 'Asian' magazine?*
- *6 adjectives describing their feelings towards the image?*
- *Did the image 'speak' to them in any particular way, did they identify with it?*

On average the process took around 2hrs and all responses were recorded and then transcribed by myself. It should be noted that the issue

of how much time to give the respondents posed a dilemma, in terms of whether to impose restrictions on viewing time, as if they were seeing these words/images 'normally' in a magazine. I decided that this was an unfair 'imagining' to expect and I was not placed to make a judgement on how long their 'normal' viewing of an image etc would take. Therefore a restriction free approach was taken, where time control was placed with the respondents. The responses were analysed largely in terms of discourse analysis (see Chapter 7) and Hall's decoding model (pg 142). In terms of general discussion (e.g. summaries and conclusion) readings are largely referred to in dominant/oppositional terms. However, through analysing youth responses in conjunction with youth biographies the restrictive nature of the model became apparent. Therefore, in my specific analyses, I have chosen to make reading categories more extensive, flexible and contextual. For instance, I have noted a mix of *negotiated and oppositional* readings within a single response (e.g. pg 174) and *dominant readings entwined with self conscious feelings* (e.g. pg 189). In addition, it should be noted that what may count as a dominant code/reading within one context (e.g. British Asian magazine discourse) may not in a hegemonic context (e.g. magazines in general). From the responses, recurrent and contrasting perspectives were drawn out and also analysed in relation to individual biographies (see Parts Four and Five).

In my view, because a friendly rapport had already been established during the first meeting with the respondents, the process was comfortable and detailed responses were gathered. All of the respondents expressed their enjoyment at taking part in this section of the research in particular.

Limitations

1. Perhaps the most obvious limitation regarding the audience studies genre (as already indicated) has been referred to as 'the fetishism of resistance' (Kellner, 1995). Importantly, by focusing on the celebratory or

pleasurable aspects of audience responses, attention is easily diverted from socio economic inequalities relating to gender, 'race' and class etc. Overall, the issue of power then is collapsed into cultural relativism, as being an active reader doesn't necessarily translate to the ability to exert power over the text (Ang, 1996). Further, to recall points made in the introductory discussion, the fact that popular cultural texts often operate on the level of 'pleasure' may mean that an oppositional reading does not translate to a discarding of that text. This serves to problematise Hall's three-tier model and with this in mind, it may be more useful to contextualize different perceptions and their social outcomes. In addition, the context of viewing practices is important; certainly in personal experiences of television, newspaper or magazine viewing, I may quash 'critical insight' if my intention for viewing is simply to 'switch off' for awhile and 'just relax'. Therefore, often quite contrary meanings can be drawn out from a media text, depending on the particular viewing context (as highlighted earlier, e.g. pg 131).

2. To finish with a comment on my own research, while this part of the study was successful in terms of gathering open and animated responses to visual discourses, there was a tendency at times for a minority of individuals, having spoken about their feelings about an image/written text, to then ask 'is that right?' as if they were being judged in terms of correct or incorrect responses. I assured them that there was no issue of right/wrong and their personal view point was all that I was interested in. While at the outset and during the interaction process, I qualified that the study was to gather individual responses, questions such as these point to the implicit unequal power dynamics between researcher and respondent, no matter how much care is taken to minimize its existence.

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Summary

The inclusion of youth responses to visual discourses was considered an important aspect of this empirical study in order to attribute agency to individuals in conjunction with the biographical method. This was also seen as necessary in order to balance out my subjective textual analysis while also providing a means for comparison with the findings from interviews with media producers. However, these responses are not seen to be representative of an 'ultimate truth' as interpretations are dependent on a variety of factors, of which the artificial viewing context may be one. Further, while responses have been gauged in terms of the encoding/decoding model (Hall, 1981b) this has been done in a manner that extends the original model to allow for flexible, contradictory and above all contextual readings. Before moving on to illustrate the findings of my methodological analysis, this part of the thesis concludes with some overall reflections on the methodological study, as discussed overleaf.

Methodological Reflections

The methods used in this study, both in singular terms and in conjunction with each other were considered the most appropriate and have yielded important and interesting findings. However, a number of issues have emerged through the course of the study that point to areas for improvement and/or further research. These are as follows:

1. As I shall discuss shortly (through Parts Four and Five) one of the salient findings to emerge from the youth responses to visual discourses and youth narratives are binary positionings based on essentialist notions of 'race' and culture. Although I was interested in gathering individual experiences and views, in light of the above, it may have been fruitful to also enable 'dialogue' to occur *between* individuals through for instance, small focus groups. These could have been centred on the visual discourses and then responses contextualized within group discussions. This may have enabled the youths to *talk to each other* about their perceptions and lived realities, which may have been more transgressive than just sharing their views with me. In a similar vein, it may have been useful to enable discussions to take place between 'cultural producers' and 'cultural consumers' therefore allowing differential motivations and expectations to be aired.

2. Although one of my aims was to conduct research in the neglected area of magazines (see introductory discussion) representations from a wider range of sources within this category could have been included, such as men's magazines. The omission of this source is considered a weakness of the study which incorporated men's experiences and views however did not include visual material that specifically 'spoke to them'. Although many of the visual discourses included are taken from youth oriented magazines in general, there is a considerable number that emanate from women's magazines. This was largely due to my use of the latter type of magazines however this limits the comprehensiveness of the visual material used for this study. Further research could be

conducted in terms of orientalist representations in male oriented magazines that may highlight a specifically masculinist discourse.

3. On the issue of visual representations, it may also have been useful to broaden the area of representation to, for instance, explore transnational representations of 'Asian Culture' and transnational responses to them. While this was beyond the scope of the present study, future research could be conducted in this area in order to compare and contrast representations of Asianness from the Indian sub-continent with those from the diaspora. These processes could be viewed in conjunction with how 'Asian youth' and 'British Asian youth' consume these discourses. This could be extended to different geographical locations (e.g. American Asian diaspora) and age groups (e.g. intergenerational responses).
A further important point on the area of representations is that although through my analyses, the issue of whiteness and how it represents / is represented emerges as a significant issue (see Part Four) it is Asianness that retains its orientalist position as 'object' of study. In other words, by designing the research in terms of the 'representation and consumption of Asian culture', whiteness retains its position of normality (see pg 34) therefore to an extent orientalist frames of reference are reproduced. However, this has been countered by firstly, incorporating visual discourses from both white, hegemonic sources and Asian, minority sources. Secondly, within a context of 'difference', through the representation of Asianness, the manifestation of whiteness is apparent. Therefore through my analysis of visual discourses I have sought to illustrate and demystify the superior representation of whiteness (e.g. see discussion on Image 1 pgs 160-165) in order to deconstruct its centrality. Thirdly, I have aimed to gain contextual readings from 'white youth' and 'youth of Asian origin' and their responses serve to reflect/challenge hegemonic positions and representations. However, in my view it is important that overt challenges to the invisible and homogenous representation of white culture/ whiteness (such as Dyer, 1988; Gabriel, 1998) are made through research design in order to challenge orientalism through research practices.

PART FOUR

Representations & Responses

This part begins by identifying various projects of popular culture (e.g. cinema) that serve to construct and enable consumption of 'the Other'. This paves the way for the next three chapters that consist of my analysis of visual discourses (photographic images and written text) that refer to Asianness in some form, taken from both British mainstream and Asian magazines (as has been explained in Part Three). Valuable infusions to my analysis are also presented in the views of media producers and particularly consumers, constituted by responses from my interview sample to the discourses they were shown, which are highlighted and discussed accordingly.

I begin with an analytical discussion of four magazine photographic images (two each from British mainstream and Asian sources) where observations have involved analysis on firstly, a descriptive level and secondly, at the level of meaning making or to recall the discussion of Barthes from Chapter 7, the 'denotative' and 'connotative'/ 'myth' levels. The pieces of written text that follow over the next two chapters are examples of themes that commonly emerged as relating to 'Asian culture' or 'Asianness' in some way through my viewing of these magazines. A selection has been offered under each of the thematic categories that I identified for thorough analytical illustration. As indicated in Chapter 7, it should be noted that thematic categories and therefore analysis is more substantial in relation to 'British Asian' magazine discourses which is simply a reflection of the greater material present on 'Asian culture' and varying positionings in an Asian orientated magazine as opposed to a 'mainstream' publication, which is underpinned by a normalized hegemonic culture. In addition, for practical reasons only one piece of discourse from each thematic category was shown to interviewees. Overall, the chapters that follow return to the themes of orientalism and racism (discussed in Parts One and Two) through cultural representations and material practices.

Chapter 9: Popular Commodity Culture

"India is a commodity to be bought and sold" (Ray, 2000: 164).

To Take or Not to Take: Representing the Other in Popular Culture

It is through the various arenas of popular culture that the dynamics of racism, orientalism and commodifications of culture intersect.

The 'cultural difference' of Black people has conventionally been presented as making them incompatible with or even 'swamping' the British way of life as is best exemplified through the New Right rhetoric of the eighties (Barker,1981). This could be related to Asian migrants in particular in terms of having a strong 'culture' that was a particular threat to Englishness by virtue of its difference, for instance, through language, dress etc that was not so marked in the case of West Indians for example (as highlighted earlier on pg 54). It is interesting to note how those same 'cultural differences' and traits of unassimilability now epitomise 'Asian Kool' (term used by Huq,1996 to describe the proliferation of 'Asian culture' in the West) creating various avenues for 'mainstream culture' to utilize. For instance, Asians have traditionally been marginalized in MTV youth culture in contrast to 'Black iconography' which is depicted, particularly through 'Gangsta Rap,' in terms of a 'tough' masculinity (Huq, 1996). However in recent times, the presence of 'Asian culture' has become increasingly visible riding the musical airwaves, although significantly largely through the 'mainstream' sounds and white bodies of, for instance, Madonna (*Frozen, 1998*), Britney Spears (*Toxic, 2004*) and even, in line with hierarchical constructions of 'coolness', black rap star, Missy Elliot (*Get Your Freak On, 2001*).

It has been argued that popular culture possesses a dual tendency with regards to the politics of 'race', whereby it simultaneously enables the expression of racism and allows for racist images to be challenged and boundaries of separation ruptured (Sharma et al, 1996; Solomos and Back, 1996). This view is reflected through my interviews with media producers, although the actual impact of 'cultural visibility' on the socio-economic positioning and experiences of minorities remained glossed over. For instance, as a features writer for a British Asian publication said in response to my question on this issue:

"I think culture is an important route for challenging what passes for the accepted and taken for granted and the fact that Asian culture has come to the forefront can only be a good thing because the most important thing is for us to be seen and heard and through different areas of popular culture we can do that and that's what should be focused on".

The progressive potential of popular culture has been illustrated through the work of Fiske (1989) for example, who concentrates on the ways in which subordinated groups appropriate the resources available within the dominant culture in order to gain increasing power which serves to undermine dominance without necessarily altering power relations. However, as has already been emphasized in this thesis (see Chapter 3) such approaches lean towards one side of the picture in terms of over-celebrating the potential of 'bottom up' resistance. This gives the impression that institutions of popular culture are divorced from the historical, ideological and capitalist fabric of society (as discussed in Chapter 1 in relation to issues of diaspora and hybridity). As I have indicated earlier (see pg 48) subordinated groups do not necessarily have easy access to resources within popular culture, leaving them to focus primarily on 'being visible,' the nature of which can reinforce hegemonic representations and alienate the minority groups they seek to represent.

Mercer (1990) highlights the complex character of popular culture through an analysis of 'style' by exploring the view that 'natural' looking hairstyles such as the Afro or dreadlocks are seen as the 'authentically black'

hairstyles. The interesting point Mercer makes is that these hairstyles have little relation to Africanness in contemporary African societies. A similar point can be made in reference to the culinary dish, Chicken Tikka Massala which does not exist in restaurant menus of the Indian sub continent but is something that has come to represent Asianness and more significantly Britishness in Western popular culture. However, perhaps this is, as it always has been, the very crux of the point, as illustrated by Zlotnick:

"When the British incorporated curry into British cuisine, they were incorporating the Other into the self but on the self's terms. They were incorporating not Indian food, but their own 'invention' of curry powder" (quoted in Narayan, 1995: 65).

Mercer (1990) emphasises that the diasporean hairstyles have developed as creative responses to experiences of racism and as a challenge to the long held assumption of beauty envisioned within a Eurocentric lens. He notes that various cultural symbols of African style have been emptied of their radical content and made available for mass consumption. Arenas of popular culture then need to be placed within a capitalist system of commodification. Here, 'new' products that can be easily and profitably marketed are continuously drawn into the arena, their saleability being enhanced through a promotion of 'exotic difference' while discarding undesirable or challenging cultural elements. As I shall illustrate during this part of the thesis, this process is reflected in media representations of 'Asianness' where appropriation is carried out on a strategic and selective level. For instance, the aesthetic 'sari and bindi' are promoted but not 'arranged marriages' which continue to be viewed as indicative of Eastern backwardness (Sharma et al, 1996). However, the latter has been used in racial and orientalist discourses that aim to reinforce an inferiorized difference as well as to interpellate Asians into the fold while excluding blacks. For instance, the cultural racism of Thatcher's new right in the eighties involved praising the 'strong family values' of Asians that simultaneously served as a negative comment on the 'problem' of young

black males which was located within 'weak family structures' (Gilroy, 1987).

Solomos and Back (1996) call the selectivity involved in cultural commodification, a profit motivated 'corporate multiculturalism,' that while promoting the goal of trans-cultural unity, reinforces crude cultural and racial stereotypes. Further, through the process of a market driven focus on 'difference' in consumer markets, diversity within becomes homogenised while presenting the Other in fragments for excavation by the West (Iskandar, 2003 / Web Source). In this way, a 'fast food style' cultural sampling of the Orient is packaged for simple consumption, making it easily digestible for the Occidental. As I shall illustrate through the remaining parts of this thesis, the commodification of culture enables the operation of a type of cultural voyeurism where 'tours of blackness' can be carried out without any significant challenge to long held differential power relations and 'white' hegemony. As bell hooks states:

"To make one's self vulnerable to the seduction of difference, to seek an encounter with the Other, does not require that one relinquish forever one's mainstream positionality. When race and ethnicity become commodified as resources for pleasure, the culture of specific groups, as well as the bodies of individuals, can be seen as constituting an alternate playground where members of dominating races, genders, sexual practices affirm their power-over in intimate relations with the Other" (hooks, 1992: 23).

These processes are compounded within the realm of global capitalism that has produced an increasing fascination with the marketing of ethnicity and cultural difference (Robins, 1991) in a similar but more sophisticated manner to the projects of the early orientalists (e.g. see pg 89). Various realms of popular culture can be seen to fuel the processes that have been discussed above, that reinforce orientalist systems of representation, for instance: *music, cinema* and *advertising*. It is to a discussion of each that I now turn, starting with music.

Music

Perhaps the most high profile 'culture vulture' is fashion and pop icon Madonna whose appropriation of South Asian culture through Asian inspired images and music, for a predominantly non-Asian audience can be seen as orientalist because it reflects and reproduces 'white privilege'. It has been argued that her 'race' and celebrity gives her preferred access to economic, social, cultural and political capital so that she can define what is desirable about the South Asian Other (Hutnyk, 2000; Puwar, 2002). This process is further explored in relation to Madonna in the next chapter that focuses on visual images (see pgs 166 -170). The exploitative processes involved in music more generally are accentuated through global capitalism that enables corporations such as Sony to sell Western produced 'Asian fusion' music back to Asian youth. Significantly, this is seen as a form of neo-colonialism through "extracting raw materials and selling it back to the natives" (Kalra and Hutnyk, 1998).

In terms of colonialist revival, Iskandar (2003) points to the Columbian-Lebanese singer, Shakira's arrival in the American media as marking the resurgence of colonial orientalism through the exploitation of an "eroticised and gendered sensationalism". To illustrate this, he points to 'belly-dancing' as integral to Shakira's act which places 'the harem fantasy' (see pg 90) as a primary factor in her construction. This feeds into age-old orientalist portrayals of the 'Oriental woman' who has occupied a significant place not only in exoticizing the Oriental woman but also in Othering the East as feminine, seductive and dangerous. However, in my view there are difficulties with this argument that falls into a critical view of the concept of self-orientalism (e.g. see pg 80). To just place Shakira's 'belly dancing' act within the realm of negative orientalist constructions stamps out the indigenous history of the cultural act and agency of the subject while reinforcing the power of hegemonic constructions.

In addition, what may be argued to be the exploitation of female sexuality can be seen in a variety of 'white female' pop acts such as Britney Spears

for example. However it is important to note the way racialized bodies are particularly objectified through popular culture. For instance, the talents of successful Black artists (e.g. Beyonce and Jennifer Lopez) have been condensed into consistent coverage of their voluptuous bodies and significantly, their 'difference' from the 'mainstream' norm (see Harper's Bazaar, American edition, March 2004). The fascination with dissecting 'Black bodies' may be traced back to the case of Saartjie Baartman (famously known as the 'Hottentot Venus') a black South African tribeswoman who was paraded naked in 'exhibitions' during the early nineteenth century in London and Paris. She was analysed by whites, who highlighted the differences with white bodies and similarities with animals, with particular focus on her 'enlarged buttocks' (ZAR.CO.ZA). In addition, bell hooks (1992) notes the depiction of a "protruding butt" as an indication of a "heightened sexuality in the sexual iconography of black pornographic imagination" and this is something that is marketed by black artists themselves, for instance through hip-hop lyrics and videos.

Cinema

In his review of the prevalence of orientalism in contemporary cinema, Sardar (1999) points to the regularity with which the East/Orient is negatively depicted, as in the normalized image of the fanatical 'Middle Eastern Terrorist' in numerous Hollywood portrayals (e.g. *True Lies 1994*). Sardar also highlights contemporary American depictions of Japan in cinema and computer games as authoritarian and machine like. He links this 'techno-orientalism' to Japan's historical and increasing detachment from Western hegemony coupled with its monopoly over technology, leading to a fear that Western culture might itself be overwhelmed by the Oriental Other.

Of particular interest, is Sardar's argument that amidst globalization, 'the Orient' itself has increasingly become globalized hence any region/country can be orientalized when subject to a greater power. He therefore claims that Europe itself has become a new Orient vis a vis

America and argues that the American representation of Europe reflects the classic patterns of orientalism. To substantiate this, he points to the English being orientalized through American films and sitcoms which seek to present London as frozen in a 'quaint history', with emphasis on stereotypical images of London and exaggerated upper middle-class accents. However, it is my view that to present this as a contemporary form of orientalism trivializes orientalist ideology and practice, while divorcing cultural processes from political and economic ones. It may be more accurate to see such processes as a play on 'difference' as opposed to an 'Othering' practice involving a 'superior us versus inferior them' acting out of power relations. To present Europe, and in particular Britain as the 'new Orient' serves to dehistoricize and decontextualize the hegemonic world position Britain has held under the Empire coupled with the global influence it still holds. Admittedly this is not on the scale of the Superpower, especially in terms of the 'Americanization' of global culture, visible for example through the far reaching arms of MTV and McDonalds. However in terms of contemporary political decisions Britain and America are strong allies, 'the wars on terror' being a case in point.

In the area of cinematic self-representations, Hooks (1994) has identified Black American Director Spike Lee's Malcolm X as a largely formulaic Hollywood portrayal. For example, she points to the absence of Malcolm's critiques of capitalism and colonialism's links with racism in the film therefore a more 'acceptable' version of the controversial figure is presented for 'mainstream' approval. In addition, D'souza and Shakur (2003) have analysed British Asian films such as East is East (2000) which focuses on central protagonist, Pakistani George Khan. The film humorously charts his attempts to resurrect his culture in England through his children in the form of arranged marriages and mosque visits. The authors note that while the film attempts to provide a sympathetic picture of working class South Asian diasporic culture, it is Khan's English wife and the northern English community who emerge as flexible and tolerant thus underlying the narrative is how the West 'deals with' Asian culture. D'souza and Shakur highlight such portrayals as perhaps

explaining the popularity of such films with Western audiences but not necessarily with British Asians. This point is substantiated through my interviews with 'youth of Asian origin' that problematize areas of self-representation (e.g. see pg 247).

Advertising: Creating and Selling Reality

Advertising can be seen to be intrinsically linked to a commodity system that is primarily about selling products through images to obtain happiness and satisfaction (Jhally, 2003). However, in addition to this Gabriel (1994) has spoken of adverts as condensed narratives that make use of "mystificatory and mythologizing" representations of 'the Other'.

In their study of popular culture and racism, Solomos and Back (1996) highlight the significant changes occurring in how the popular media represents 'race' and difference in advertising and point to nineteenth century advertisements that relied on tools of Empire and nationhood to promote products. This is illustrated by McClintock (1995) in her analyses of mass advertisements for soap during the colonial period which were tied to the 'civilizing mission'. For instance, adverts for soap depicted a black child being washed with soap and then becoming white. Owing to the absence of such overtly racist images in more recent times, Solomos and Back claim that colonial images have been replaced by attempts to develop a seemingly harmonious, trans-national advertising aesthetic (e.g. Benetton adverts). However, it is my view that much of the visual discourse involved in representing 'Asianness' in the popular 'mainstream media' and to a lesser extent, 'minority media', continues to invoke colonial and orientalist connections. This shall be illustrated with reference to magazine discourses in the chapters that follow.

Further, Rao (1996) has argued that locked in many global transnational advertisements (e.g. Pepsi) are the dichotomous discourses of 'undesirable tradition' and 'desirable modernity'. She argues that following a history of Western imperialism, transnational advertising now serves to define what the 'Third World's' authentic nature is. Therefore

advertisements largely reflect the popular orientalist tendency to 'freeze the native culture' within an essentialist frame. In line with what has been discussed in this chapter, this process is underpinned by Capitalism in terms of transnational commodities that are marketed in terms of a privileged West/whiteness existing harmoniously with the essentialized Other within an arena of pleasure. These processes are also evident in what has been called, the new 'Asianisation' of British advertising (Patel, 2003/Web Source). Here, focus is on the increasing number of Asian oriented adverts, however the motivations and success are questionable with many adverts relying on cultural stereotypes such as 'arranged marriages' and orientalist symbols designed to invoke a sense of India (e.g. 'dusty streets' ; 'dancing' ; 'elephants').

The essentialist framing of Asianness within a wider context of Eastern backwardness and Western modernity can also be seen in American advertising portrayals of India. For instance, Gosh (2003) argues that the media in general and advertising in particular produce an orientalist vision of an exoticized and commodified India that either erases or marginalises indigenous peoples. Significantly however, she argues that their cultural practices, symbols and artefacts are appropriated in order to sell American based products. To illustrate this point, Gosh highlights an advertising fashion feature of American Vogue (March 1997) that features a white female model and a 'highly feminized' (through for instance, heavy eye make-up) Indian taxi driver, wearing a turban. The feature portrays a story involving these two characters that revolves around the car breaking down and them becoming lost. While the driver is shown (in line with his 'inherent spirituality') as sitting in the lotus position on the roof of the cab praying, the woman (in line with her 'inherent rationality' albeit by virtue of her 'race' as opposed to gender) is looking at the map and is presented as being in charge and superior. Similar orientalist representations are illustrated in my analysis of British magazine discourses as I shall discuss shortly (e.g. see pgs 160 -165).

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Summary

This chapter has served to illustrate the representation of 'race' culture and Otherness in various realms of popular culture. I have attempted to highlight the strategic promotion of those aspects of Othered cultures that are designated as desirable/acceptable by dominant forces. These largely reflect orientalist conceptions of cultures where stereotypical images and neutralized cultural products are cast into the arena for easy, 'fast food style' consumption. This enables Otherness to be utilized without challenge to white hegemony and unequal power relations within a context of global commodification. I have also drawn attention to the limitations involved in the concept of self-orientalism and projects of self-representation that can serve to reproduce hegemonic world-views. My own findings, in relation to the orientalist discourses presented in British magazine features, reflect the dictums of the popular culture (as has been discussed in this chapter) of which they form a part. It is to a presentation of this analysis coupled with youth readings that the next chapter shall focus on.

Chapter 10: Beneath the Image

Image 1/source: Marie Claire July 2001

Context

This image constitutes one part of a ten page feature entitled 'Passage to India' (the title itself invokes the well known British novel and film set in colonial India) that involves a 'journey of discovery' through various parts of Mumbai with a 'lone white female' involved in various scenarios. For example, she is pictured with an elephant or groups of 'natives', where significantly they are only part of the backdrop, aside from an image that depicts a large group of children laughing excitedly at the camera while sitting on top of a car and the image that is presented here, where 'the native' is also fore grounded.

Observations on descriptive, denotative level

Regarding the standing white model, while her upper body isn't shown, she is clothed in bright colours, the trousers in particular point to a certain

'exoticness' via their vibrant (a word often used in conjunction with portrayals of India and the East in general) colour and satiny fabric. However this is an exoticness that is Westernised, signified not only through its meeting with the white body but also anchored by the text in the top right hand corner of the image (seen in original but not legible in reprint) that although points to conventionally 'ethnic' fabrics, such as chiffon, includes only Western designers.

Regarding the sitting, elderly Asian man, he appears to be in a cross-legged position on the sand, with his back to the camera and disengaged with the woman and the viewer. This may be interpreted in two ways, firstly on a more subversive level it challenges common mainstream portrayals of 'natives' that have been noted as facing the camera, allowing the viewer easy access to 'the Other' (Collins and Lutz, 1993). Alternatively, the highly constructive aspect of the fashion spread in general could be seen to depict the subject as if unaware that he has company or is being photographed because he is so self-absorbed. This may suggest/construct a naturalized image of the old Asian 'fakir' man meditating, reflecting orientalist and colonial representations. Additionally, his upper half is naked and lower half covered in white cloth, reminiscent of popular images of India's most famously depicted 'holy fakir' man, Mahatma Gandhi.

Also noted is the 'exotic' locale signified by sand, water, lush greenery and the brightness of the photograph therefore denoting notions of exoticism through images of places that are coded as distant and elsewhere, yet the image also provides a 'rural' 'back to nature' feel which the 'native' is at one with, both physically (he is sitting on the sand) and mentally (self-absorbed).

From the surrounding images in the fashion feature (not presented here or shown to interviewees) it seems that this feature tours Mumbai, yet significantly the glamour and decadence of Mumbai (which exists primarily through it being the home of the Indian film industry) is not

shown in favour of a more 'authentic' India; in other words, 'primitive' and 'traditional' is all that is presented of India. This could be said to be reflective of, as discussed earlier in this thesis, 'orientalist melancholia' (see Kondo,1997) where a presentation of 'modern India' would serve to challenge both familiarized 'knowledge' of a vast gap between East and West as well as the Western commentator's site of privilege. The importance of appeals to the familiar comes to the fore in the production of visual images, as a picture editor for a mainstream publication told me:

"...when thinking about concepts for a pictorial feature, it's got to be instantly understood and have instant impact...there are little or no words to aid that understanding so we need to keep things simple and draw on popular perceptions in an uncomplicated way as possible....yes, we are always trying to be inventive but it works best when we use elements and associations that are recognized straight away..."

Analysis on connotative, mythical level

Leading on from the in-depth description above, the subjects are presented as 'opposites' through various contrasting signs relating to their bodies that gain meaning from each other, for instance:

- old man-young woman
- dark skinned man-light skinned woman
- sitting man-standing woman
- half-naked man-extravagantly dressed woman

This has a powerful effect of emphasising *difference and differential power relations*, not just between the two subjects but between the East and West itself, through the bodies of those in the image who are there to represent and signify these constructed binary entities. The portrayal of the semi-dressed 'native' man, sitting on the ground, at one with his 'natural' surroundings presents a freeze-dried essence of Asian people/Asianness according to popular perceptions. This is contrasted with the clothed and standing stance of the white woman, who is

immediately positioned as superior, as the West has traditionally been positioned in relation to the East. On the one hand, this offers a challenge to common gender images depicting male dominance and female subordinance represented through advertising in general (see Goffman, 1979) in that the woman is shown to be in a superior position to the man through this standing, clothed and towering-over stance. However, this reading is made complex by issues of 'race' and historical power relations, where white Western women have stood in a dominant position through imperialism. This conjures up the image of white female colonial travellers and their superior status (as discussed earlier in Chapter 5). At the same time, through this seemingly subversive performance of gender identities, an orientalist framing is retained through the feminized, subordinate role attributed to the man and therefore the East. In this light, the superior position assumed by the white woman vis a vis the inferior and stereotypical position adopted by the Asian man in his country is compounded by the assumption/portrayal of the white woman as a visitor to the country on 'a passage to India' therefore evoking the essence of colonialism, the British Raj and orientalism. My earlier observation of the elderly man conjuring up an image of Mahatma Gandhi feeds into this recalling of a specific historical period of unequal Indo-British power relations.

Of course, it must be noted that these observations reflect the specific knowledge that I am bringing and context within which I am viewing this image. However, this view is consolidated to an extent by the fact that the source for this image is a 'mainstream' fashion magazine, targeted at women of the ethnic majority which is captured through the image and entire feature that caters for the white, Western female who is embodied in the model. Her transposition to different, yet essentially similar orientalist 'Indian' settings provides the reader with her own fantasy of 'cruising exotica' for a short while. The image relies on a number of myths, as described, in order to reinforce the ideology of white Western modernity as superior to Indian or Eastern traditionalism and the ease with which it can be toured, taken in or captured.

When this image was shown to my interviewees, most of them commented on the artistic merit of the photograph (e.g. the uniqueness of not showing the faces of the subjects) however there were marked variations in responses relating to the content or message of the image, according to 'racial origin'. For instance, all of the 'white youth' without exception pointed to what they saw as an 'authentic' India or East (even though there is no 'overt' indication through this particular image that this is India at all) being shown through the feature therefore largely reflecting a *dominant reading*. As *Kathleen* says:

"I think this is a pretty nice one, it's got a calmness about it....very peaceful, I think because of the Indian man sitting simply on the ground....he doesn't need fancy clothes like the woman does because he's really on a higher plane, surrounded by natural beauty...that's what India is all about I think....although I do like the woman's trousers..."
(Kathleen, 24yrs, masters student, self identifies as British)

Interestingly, liking the trousers that the woman is wearing in the feature was something that the women across ethnicity commented on, reflecting the gendered nature of the magazine and fashion in general, although 4 out of 5 of the women of Asian origin highlighted the fact that the text did not feature any Asian designers. Most male comments, across ethnicity, that referred to the trousers was to highlight the contrast with the half-naked man. However, even through some form of *negotiated reading,* the predominant view of the white males centred on the 'true' nature of such depictions. For instance, as *Julian*, upon viewing the image, recalls of a one month trip to South India four years ago:

"I suppose, you do see a lot of men dressed like that, not so much in the Cities, but certainly in some villages and its not just religious men....there shouldn't be any judgement though....it is very hot there.."
(Julian, 21yrs, student, self identifies as British)

In contrast, all of the 'youth of Asian origin' who were shown the same image (and it should be mentioned all chose to speak about this image last) responded largely negatively.

Here, the preferred meaning encoded within the image was understood and challenged in *oppositional readings.* The image was viewed as stereotypical and condescending plus a metaphor for East-West relations and according to some, the historical relations between India and Britain, echoing my observations (although once again it should be noted that there is no 'overt' indication through the image that this is India) as the following views illustrate:

"I think this is pretty typical, magazines are full of these sort of pictures that show non Western countries and people in a literally poor light...you see this and are supposed to think 'aah the poor brown man hasn't got enough money to buy clothes but he's close to God which is all that matters' while the white woman, of course is dressed well because she's rich and not really from the same place as him even though they're pictured together...all you are meant to see here is extreme difference" (Shalini, 20yrs, student, self identifies as Indian).

"This picture is awful... I mean it's blatantly showing rich, modern Britain and poor, backward India... I really didn't like this, the Raj ended years ago didn't it but this is almost transporting you back there....tell me, if the implication isn't supposed to be an endorsement of the superiority of the west, then why not have a smartly dressed young Asian man standing with her, but here he's clearly not meant to be her equal...he's hardly even wearing clothes and that's just not realistic" (Akshay, 30yrs, accountant, self identifies as Asian).

Such responses need to be seen within biographical contexts that highlight personal experiences of racial inequality and awareness of historical power relations between India and Britain (see Chapter 13). Linked to this are complexities emerging from minority positionings and ensuing protective feelings over 'their culture' that means oppositional readings can also be seen as *defensive* readings.

Further, it is significant that through some of the narratives of the 'youth of Asian origin' there is strategic recourse to the same popular conceptions of 'Asian culture' (e.g. spirituality) that are consistently condemned in responses to magazine discourses. These points shall be illustrated further in Chapter 14 of this thesis (e.g. see pg 238).

Image 2/source: The Sunday Times Style Supplement, June 1998

Context

Single page advert.

Observations on descriptive, denotative level

The key signs of the image can be identified as the decorative mehndi (also known as henna) and bindi on the palm (just visible in reprint) that is conventionally applied to the forehead by Hindu women, and the watch against a black background which serves to foreground and highlight the adorned white hand and wrist. These serve as a signifier for the brand of watch using the name of Madonna, which takes on the role of the signified.

Analysis on connotative, mythical level

It is significant that the image focuses only on the hand/wrist of Madonna's body and of course the highlighting of the wrist enables the prominent display of the watch, for which this image is clearly an advert for. However, it is significant also on the level of cultural representation in that the adorned wrist/hand with mehndi and the bindi is sufficient to

signify that this is Madonna's hand. In this sense, the decorated hand constitutes a synecdochal sign, in that a part comes to represent the whole, in this case, of Madonna. To go a step further from this, Madonna herself could be said to constitute a synecdochal sign of Asianness, as explored further below.

The text at the bottom of the image, 'Madonna and her Beluga' directly informs the viewer of this being Madonna (as well as the brand of watch) and performs a 'relay function' or substantiating guide to the image. However it is arguable that even without this aid, the reader would guess this is Madonna's hand, after all it is the image itself that is positioned to be the focus, in terms of its much larger size and higher order compared to the linguistic sign. As such the image and in turn the watch manufacturers are relying heavily on the inter-textual power of Madonna's image that cross-cuts music, fashion and culture. Crucially, the year of this advertisement coincided with the release of Madonna's *Ray of Light* album where certain songs included her rendition of the ancient Indian language of Sanskrit. In addition, the video for the song, *Frozen* (February 1998) spectacularly showcased her mehndi covered hands, which represent her flirtation with Asianness at the time. The knowledge of this is enough to equate the adorned hand with Madonna.

In this way the image transmits a crucial myth in that Madonna is presented as representing and being represented by these Asian cultural artefacts, which are taken out of their historical and cultural context, through her popular and above all mainstream usage of these items. In this sense the mehndi and bindi, which are associated with something else (i.e. 'Asian female' adornment) and somewhere else (i.e. the Indian sub-continent) become submerged through Madonna's adoption of these items and identification by these items. This process harks back to a much larger historical imperial and orientalist project and is a micro reflection of a more contemporary global capitalist commodification project, as previously discussed in Chapter 9. The crucial point being that what is portrayed is a naturalized association of Madonna with bindi and

mehndi in such a powerful sense that this image presents her as owning such items hence actual Asian bodies/identities are excluded, or in Barthesian terms (see pg 127) the cultural artefacts presented through the image are emptied of history and meaning and associations are distorted.

Indeed, the undesirability of marked bodies even in relation to marked products as well as in general comes to the fore in the production of magazine visual images that highlights the importance of skin colour, an issue that I shall discuss further in Part Five (e.g. see pg 221). For now, consider the following that a 'white English' model told me in relation to the mainstream magazine work she has done:

"I've done quite a few Bollywood style photo shoots and it continues to amaze me at castings that it's mainly the white girls who get these jobs...I've been in magazines wearing Indian style clothes and makeup, even been put on fake tan to make me look brown and while I enjoy doing it, I just think surely, they can find an Asian girl to do this..." (Jodie, 20yrs).

Returning to the image, the naturalized association of Madonna with the cultural products aids the impact of the watch advertisement, with the Beluga watch being a 'natural' adornment, amongst these other 'natural' adornments, to Madonna's wrist. Madonna as a, and perhaps *the* symbol of Western fashion and popular culture symbolizes the continuing power of the West to excavate and re-construct Othered cultures according to its own terms and systems of representation. As such the image feeds into and adds weight to the historical ideology of Western, white power and orientalist notions of Eastern cultures and lands, mainly symbolized and represented through singular frameworks. In this case, the framework is constituted through the aesthetic (as this advert is from a mainstream style magazine) mehndi and bindi (one could also add, 'the sari' which Madonna also wore regularly during her Asian incarnation) but common also are one dimensional frames of 'Bollywood' 'poverty' 'corruption' etc. At the same time, the image in its promotion of Asian aesthetic products

manages to dispose of its Eastern roots that while easily commodified are significantly less saleable if a global, Western icon does not become its ambassador. Through these means, Asian cultural products are presented as free-floating and easily taken on/over by the 'mainstream' which is aided through the absence of Asian representation of these artefacts on the global stage.

This image provoked interesting reactions with the majority of youths, across gender and ethnicity, greatly appreciating the artistic nature of the image and therefore choosing to speak about this one first. This illustrates the pleasure aspect of viewing images, as highlighted in the introductory discussion of this thesis. As *Daniel* says:

"This is my favourite, it's very creative and effective...it has that wow factor" (Daniel, 18yrs, DJ, identifies as British).

However, particularly amongst the 'women of Asian origin', attempts were made to play this positive aspect down and instead emphasize the 'cultural hijacking' that they saw embedded in the picture. This was echoed by some of the 'white women' in the sample, both resulting in contradictory responses. For instance, *Riza's* response below is typical of the sample of 'women of Asian origin' that can be characterized largely as *negotiated readings* combined with *defensive* feelings. It becomes particularly interesting because through her narrative she consistently highlights the importance of cultural fusion however, as she says:

"I liked this picture....well what I mean is, it looks really good, the dark colours, focusing on the hand...very artistic....but at the same time, I don't like it, I mean...the fact that it looks good doesn't mean it's good really...it's saying that mehndi belongs to Madonna and I don't like that...it's not true, why couldn't they have had a famous Asian person....I know Madonna is probably the most famous person on the planet but it's not right really....or have Madonna but not with the mehndi, because it's not hers is it....but then I suppose it wouldn't look that striking....don't know....don't like it really"
(Riza, 25yrs, fashion designer, self identifies as British Asian).

Such responses viewed in conjunction with narratives point to the need amongst many of the youth of Asian origin to shield 'their culture' including its artefacts from the dominant majority population and thus issues of authenticity and representation constitute important concerns (as I shall discuss in Chapter 14). Interestingly, *Charlene's* response shares some common ground with Riza's views, as she relates what she sees in the image to her own identity concerns and negotiations. As she says:

"This is really cool, I liked this one a lot...it's stunning and certainly Madonna is so inspiring in starting trends and I love all her Asian stuff... but I wouldn't go all out with something like this, you know putting henna all over my hands, it makes a great photo and because it's Madonna, she can get away with it but I don't think it's right to go that far, like you're trying to become Asian or anything like that, it's abit like stealing... (Charlene, 20yrs, bar worker, self identifies as British).

As I shall discuss further (in Chapters 14 and 15 e.g. pg 258) this view substantiates narratives of the 'white women' of the sample in particular who present themselves as conscious of their 'impostor' status in the Asian cultural sphere and their keenness to not be seen as 'stealing' anything that they feel doesn't 'really belong' to them. This constitutes an important issue in general that hinges on notions and feelings around 'culture' in terms of territory and ownership. As such, their responses to the image can largely be characterized in terms of *negotiated and self conscious readings.* While the views of the men across ethnicity was largely limited to appreciation of the creativity of the image, any negative reaction came from those of Asian origin who highlighted the negative impact of appropriation yet at the same time, the fact that this was Madonna, was received with normality and even a degree of acceptability. This illustrates a complex combination of *dominant and negotiated readings.* In *Anil's* words:

"....it does annoy me that what are essentially Asian things are recognized as Madonna's things and at the same time...I suppose this is what Madonna does.... It's not like she targets any one group in particular and in a way it does raise the profile of Asian things simply because it is Madonna.....it's unjust but there is a little positive there"
(Anil, 26yrs, teacher, self identifies as Asian).

Image 3 / source: Asian Woman magazine/Autumn, 2000

Context

Single page advertising feature for Indian clothing company, R.C.K.C

Observations on descriptive, denotative level

The advertising image shows a light skinned woman dressed in 'traditional' brightly coloured garb, adorned with jewellery and has the dupatta (may be translated as scarf) on her head which she is holding. The text in the top right hand corner (seen in original but illegible in reprint) is significant as it refers to R.C.K.C as 'the soul of India,' going on to describe its variety of 'traditional' clothing ranges and materials used in their garments.

Analysis on connotative, mythical level

The appeal in this particular advert is to traditionalism, transmitted through various means: firstly, the stance of the woman through her clothes and accessories; her inviting yet coy expression with one hand

placed on the seat as if to signal to sit next to her but has at the same time an element of shyness, signified by the other hand placed on the dupatta as if about to shield her, significantly, fair skinned face, from the onlooker. This to a large extent fulfils the orientalist criteria of the Asian/Eastern woman as demurely alluring; an image that has transcended from religious mythology to Indian cinema, with countless portrayals of the heroine in possession of these traits, perhaps most significantly, the light skin. The global rise of Indian model turned actress, Ashwairya Rai (internationally probably best known as the star of Bride and Prejudice, 2004) may have as much to do with her light skin and what is often described in the Indian press as a 'global look', as it does her beauty and talent. However, this interpretation of the image may be challenged to an extent by the gaze of the model that looks straight at the camera/viewer, although this is not seen as a confrontational look, especially as her hand is placed on the dupatta as if about to shield herself, as mentioned above. The look at the camera or viewer could then be interpreted as a modest approachability.

Her outfit and stance represent the signifieds of Indian traditionalism, sophistication, culture and authenticity which is substantiated by the text that is constituted by various descriptions that have traditionally been used in portraying India/East, namely, adjectives such as: 'mystique' 'mesmerizing' 'dazzling' and invoking a sense of ancient traditions through age-old materials, such as 'incomparable Aryan zardozi work' and 'bhandanis.' This serves to conjure up a 'golden age' of India, promoted by the orientalists and nationalists alike (see pg 92) and perhaps within this, Indian womanhood in all its idealized alluring simplicity. In doing so the advert promotes the myth of a tradition associated with purity, symbolized through the chaste, traditional Indian woman, where the roots or 'soul of India' are equated with traditionalism. The clothing company, R.C.K.C. which itself has a long retailing tradition going back to the early years of the twentieth century, positions itself as a nationalist representative, bringing back or restoring India's true character, its 'soul', in the face of global influences. The fact that this

advert was reproduced in a British Asian publication takes the impact of the message further in that R.C.K.C. through its international outlets can keep Indian traditionalism, amidst Western modernism, alive for the Asian Diasporas.

Responses to this image from my interviewees consisted of similarities across ethnic and gender divisions, on various levels. Firstly, the majority pointed to the character of the photograph itself in terms of its colours, softness and ethereal like quality thus focusing on the pleasure aspects of the image through its compositionality. Secondly, the beauty of the image was highlighted in terms of the 'pretty fair model' and her 'lovely clothes' along with the 'intriguing and captivating' way she is looking at the viewer. In addition and perhaps most interestingly of all, this was seen to be an 'authentic' or ideal representation of 'Asian women' and 'Asian culture' for the youths (across gender and ethnicity) who highlighted the positive 'traditionalism' of the image, in terms of the model's clothes and the written text. This largely reflected a *dominant reading* of the image amongst the youths. These points are reflected in the quotes below:

" ...she looks lovely...her clothes, the jewellery...the sunset colours it's just really gorgeous and exotic..." (Carla, 30yrs, lawyer, self identifies as British).

"This is nice, it's a very soft image...like a painting... with a beautiful woman dressed in traditional Indian dress.."
(Andrew, 28yrs, publishing exec, self-identifies as British).

"...It's the ideal Asian woman I suppose..fair, attractive but modest at the same time..." (Salman, 24, property developer, self-identifies as British Asian).

Such views serve to highlight an idealized image of womanhood in general and Asian womanhood in particular and are substantiated further not only through the responses to certain visual discourses but also (as I shall discuss further in Chapter 15) through the narratives of both the men and women of Asian origin. These highlight the importance of

upholding cultural traditions through dress for instance, as the responsibility of Asian women. As *Jameel* said in response to this image:

"I like this one..it gives a good message...it would be nice to see more young Asian women wearing Asian clothes on a daily basis, it's important to carry on tradition especially when you're in a minority.." (Jameel, 29yrs, fitness instructor, self identifies as Asian).

Having said this, ambivalence towards the image (and by implication, to the above view) was also highlighted here and in the narratives, largely by the 'women of Asian origin'. Here, more *negotiated coupled with oppositional readings* emerged that hinged on a sense of 'burden'. This was identified in terms of the responsibility and simultaneous resentment felt for 'cultural promotion' where Asian dress inevitably becomes a 'badge of ethnicity' (see pg. 261). For instance, *Ayesha's* response to the image relates to her own feelings of identity alienation and confusion at times, as she says:

"...not really sure....I mean she looks nice in the Indian clothes but it's like the clothes are supposed to be what she should wear...do you see what I mean...it's as if she can only be truly Indian if she wears these clothes...you know I don't wear Indian clothes that much but it doesn't mean that I'm not Indian... but I've been to Indian functions or cultural meetings and perhaps that day I just felt like wearing my jeans, it's that simple...but the stares I got are unbelievable...even from girls my own age as if I was committing the crime of the century...and then you start thinking that you should only wear Indian clothes to Indian functions or Indian clothes all the time at its most elaborate just to validate what you are, as opposed to just wearing what you feel like wearing in a particular situation and then it gets crazy because you start questioning what you are..."
(Ayesha, 19yrs, beauty therapist, self identifies as Asian).

This also reflects the complex symbolic and representative nature of dress and style in general, as has been noted elsewhere (see Craik, 1994).

Image 4 /source: Asian Woman/Autumn 2002

Context

Part of fashion feature entitled, "Frill Seeker: Wild Cuts and Bold Detailing Will Bring Out your Animal Instincts."

Observations on descriptive, denotative level

The image depicts a woman standing against a dark background, dressed in a black, printed salwaar kameez (may be translated as trousers and top) with an animal print dupatta, used as a scarf wrapped around her waist and in line with the animal theme of the fashion feature, has a snake draped around her neck. She looks straight at the camera/viewer, fearless with what could be seen as a confrontational stance i.e. 'Wild and Bold' with her head slightly tilted up as if looking down at the camera/viewer (very different from the previous image). The positioning of her hips and the way the left hand gently cups the snake yet has the appearance of being placed on the hip creates the impression of an unflinching, intimidating persona. The resulting image is both powerful and striking, an agenda that is deliberately employed in the production of visual images, as a picture editor for a British Asian magazine told me:

"..it's quite a long process and a lot of people are involved in making what is seen by the public...the photographer is given a concept within which he has to work and then he'll take several pictures and then a group of us sit around and choose which images are going to be used... the main thing we look for is artistry, something that really grabs the eye and stands out...in this day and age you have to be creative because there's so much competition and your image has to stand out from the rest."

Analysis on connotative, mythical level

The signs of: snake, animal printed scarf, the black outfit, the dark background and the woman's somewhat aggressive stance all combine to signify darkness and danger, with the emphasis on animal like primitiveness and force. The use of the snake is significant as any other 'wild' animal could have been used to fit the theme of the feature however, the snake does not just evoke the impression of animal danger, it also conjures up certain popular Indian or Eastern associated myths, for instance, the 'magical snake charmer,' present in numerous Hollywood depictions of the East (the other common one being elephants as a consistent representative emblem of India). This impression of the exotic and dangerous East is compounded by the Asian female holding the snake with ease which creates an aura of 'naturalness'. She is at one with nature and is not scared of the snake or the viewer therefore she takes on the role of bold seductress in her association with the snake. The Asian woman together with the snake can be seen as feeding into age old orientalist myths of the 'exotic and dangerous East'.

The salwar kameez and dupatta signify Indianness however the way in which it is worn, wrapped around the waist, points to a trendiness or fusion of styles that is perhaps designed to appeal to the British Asian reader, for whom this magazine is designed, plus to aid the bold, confrontational impression of the woman. As such the portrayal challenges common perceptions of the 'passive Asian female' (as highlighted earlier in this thesis, e.g. pg18) by replacing it with the image of the active and fearless Asian female. However, it may also be said that the image appropriates racial ideologies commonly associated with the

sexuality of black women as aggressive and predatory (Malik, 2002). Nevertheless this image could be viewed as empowering and counter orientalist for its targeted audience, both within and outside of the 'Asian community.' This is something that all the women in the sample who were of Asian origin echoed and expressed appreciation of in their responses to the image, therefore aligning themselves with the preferred meaning through *dominant readings*. As *Raveena* says:

"...it's positive, it doesn't show the usual Asian woman being all goody goody and a wall flower, she looks strong and tough like she could kick ass if she had to, and I think a lot of young women in general now, including Asian women are like that" (Raveena, 30yrs, marketing manager, self identifies as Asian Sikh).

At the same time, the 'white women' of the sample, while appreciating the gender empowering message of the image plus the fusion orientated outfit of the model served to override this in questioning it's realism in terms of what they felt they 'knew' about 'real' Asian women. Here then there emerges a *mix of negotiated and oppositional readings* that are rooted in *hegemonic positionings and perceptions*. As *Carla* states:

"It's good I suppose because it's not what you'd expect of an Asian girl..to be that intimidating, but I'm not sure how realistic it is in terms of what you normally hear about...I've got lots of Asian girlfriends, gorgeous and intelligent, some of them are lawyers but none of them are really that confrontational or hard, it's like they have to really try...they're just really sweet" (Carla, 30yrs, lawyer, self identifies as British).

This view that mirrors mainstream constructions of Asian women was by and large echoed in the responses of the men across ethnicity who asserted that the image depicted Asian women as 'something they were not' and that went against 'their nature'. 8 out of the sample of 10 men saw the image as threatening and confrontational therefore in this sense could be said to have understood the preferred meaning and rejected it, offering *oppositional readings* that may be rooted in *stereotypical constructions of femininity*.

Further, most of the men chose to speak about this image either last or second from last and it compared far less favourably with the previous image that was seen as depicting the ideal Asian woman, and in many responses was used as a point of contrast, as *Akshay* says:

"...this is ok but it's not appealing to me... I see what is trying to be done here but it just looks really contrived ...I don't think Asian women need to come across like that to be taken seriously or be seen as strong...for me, there's much more strength and attraction in the understated and low profile, like the other image of the woman...much more real..." (Akshay, 30yrs, accountant, self identifies as Asian).

This view that emerged in some form in the responses of all the youths (aside from the women of Asian origin) serves to place perceptions of Asian women in line with mainstream discourses and to consistently mark out and restrict 'the Asian woman' within an orientalist mode. This shall be discussed further at various points during the remainder of this thesis, beginning with analysis of written text from 'mainstream' magazines, which the next chapter focuses on.

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Summary

In this chapter I have illustrated a largely fixed and one dimensional representation of Asianness that invokes orientalist and colonial connections. While this is particularly true of the 'mainstream' magazine images (images 1 and 2) that promote the 'myth' of white, Western superiority, there is also evidence of this within self-representations. In terms of youth responses, overall there emerged a split between the 'white youth', who largely reflected *dominant readings* of 'Asianness' and the 'youth of Asian origin' who were much more critical, often displaying *oppositional readings*. However, in the 'British Asian' magazine images, there is evidence of ambivalent positionings, particularly seen through the representations of 'Asian women' (images 3 and 4). For instance, images fit orientalist frames through reproducing the passive and/or dangerously exotic 'Oriental female' yet also challenge stereotypes of the 'passive

Asian woman' through bold and confrontational imagery. It is significant that the latter was welcomed by women across ethnicity yet crucially was 'accepted' only by the women of Asian origin who were keen to assert an empowered status (therefore here displayed *dominant readings*). Conversely, both 'white women' and the men in general questioned the realistic basis of such images (resulting in *negotiated* and *oppositional readings*) reflecting the power of popular orientalist and masculinist representations of (Othered) femininity.

Chapter 11: 'British Mainstream' Magazine Discourse

1. Adhering to popular notions of exotic mysticism

Tatler (April 2000) reports on:

'Mystical India

Spiritual home-apartments with an inspired ethnic mix'

Marie Claire's July 01 issue, amongst several other Indian related features, from food to fashion (including the visual image 1 discussed in the previous chapter) reports on India as the haven for:

'Spiritual Contentment'

In each of the above header statements, the magazine writers assume the role of knowledgeable 'guide' that seeks to equate India solely with mysticism and spirituality. This has the effect of distancing India from having any materialistic and economic drive and as such is excluded from the capitalist equation and by implication perhaps not a serious contender in the global economy. This view found a great degree of resonance amongst the sample of 'youth of Asian origin' who were shown the *Tatler* headers. Without exception, all demonstrated *oppositional readings* through the expression of frustration and/or anger at associating India with mysticism and spirituality, which was seen as a common way they / 'their culture' was perceived by 'the West' in general. As *Shalini* says in reference to the header:

"...it's like here we go again...you know what I mean, India as that land of magic and mystery, you hear it all the time in relation to India.. it's like all everyone in India does is sit cross-legged, hands clasped, meditating all the time...that's it, we can't do anything else...oh apart from sing and dance...you know what I mean and like any white person I bet, will agree that India is spiritual, even if and maybe especially if they haven't been

there.... It's all stereotypes...but then also every Indian person has to be spiritual, it's like expected of us...which is ridiculous" (Shalini, 20yrs, student, self identifies as Indian).

However, it is interesting to note that inspite of such infuriation at the seamless association of India and/or the East with spirituality, a number of the 'youths of Asian origin' through their narratives highlighted the 'spiritual aspects' of the Indian sub-continent as a means of attributing greater substance to 'Asian culture' compared to what was often called, 'white culture' (see pg 238). This highlights the importance of contextualizing readings within situated discourse and experiences that may engender complexities and contradictions as well as explanations. In addition, this draws attention to the limitation of attributing fixed categories to the active and varied processes involved in viewing/reading practices (as has been discussed in Chapter 8).

In contrast, there were some gender based differences amongst the 'white youth' where women who viewed the header largely demonstrated a *dominant reading*. For instance, as *Kathleen* says, despite never having been to India:

"I'd agree with this, India is this exciting, other worldly place...I've always thought of it as mystical and spiritual...very different from England and I'd love to go there one day"
(Kathleen, 24yrs, masters student, self identifies as British).

The men, across ethnicities, however appeared to be less taken with the identification of India and/or the East as mystical and spiritual and in the main, offered *oppositional readings*. This involved questioning the basis of this image while at the same time displaying awareness of its representation as such, that in many cases was linked to global capitalism, as *David's* response indicates:

"...you hear this alot don't you, that India is full of mysticism and spirituality but I don't get why, I mean I'm sure all countries and cultures have spiritual elements to them....I know plenty of people in this country

who are religious and not so materially inclined but it's like India and a lot of Eastern countries are presented as 'the' place to go to become enlightened or get in touch with your spiritual side....(laughs) especially I've noticed in advertisements for holidays to India...I guess it gives people hope that there is a better place than where you are now, so just spend some money and you can have it for a couple of weeks.."
(David, 25yrs, civil servant, self identifies as British)

The rootedness of culture and Othered cultures in particular within material interests and processes has already been discussed in Chapter 9 and will be elaborated on in the context of youth narratives in the next part of this thesis (e.g. see pg 251).

Focusing on the second statement, in the same vein, 'India' / 'ethnic' and by implication the 'East' in general is implicitly presented as in stark contrast to the materialist 'West', where India is positioned to represent a 'haven for spiritual contentment' to Western readers, and within this, the white majority readership. This implies firstly, that this is something that cannot easily be found in the economically motivated West, which also serves to reinforce the differences between 'East' and 'West' and secondly, presents India as completely one dimensional and frozen within age-old stereotypical conceptions.

Overall the statements conjure up a largely mythologized, 'postcard India' that is 'spiritual', 'mystical', 'exotic' and 'colourful', mirroring orientalist ideologies and visions of the 'fantastical imaginary East' as reflected through the views of early orientalists and the ideologies propounded during the colonial period, as has been discussed earlier in this thesis (see Chapter 5). The trend continued in the sixties and seventies through the hippie movement and 'Beatles mania' and more recently can be seen in the British and American media obsession with 'Bollywood'. This is almost always described in one dimensional frameworks of 'exoticness' or 'colourfulness' or 'kitchness' but not a contender for serious discussion or groundbreaking cinema for the Western world. This, if at all, is reserved largely for the Indian art films that portray India in its familiar

poverty stricken form, as legendary Indian commercial actress, Nargis once said in reference to the Western acclaimed art films of Satyajit Ray:

"Why do you think films like Pather Panchali become so popular abroad?...People there want to see India in an abject condition. That is the image they have of our country and a film that confirms that image seems to them authentic...His (Ray's) films are not commercially successful. They only win awards...What I want is that if Mr Ray projects Indian poverty abroad, he should also show 'Modern India'"
(quoted in Roy, 1998: 169).

2. Evoking a colonial past

'A touch of the East is all the Raj this season'
(Company magazine's 2000 catwalk guide (spring/ summer)

'All The Raj: make sure it's an Indian summer in your home this year'
(Sunday Times style supplement Feb 17 2002)

Despite the wording of both the above statements being arranged so as to not mention either Britain or India, simply using the term 'the Raj' instantly points to the colonial link between Britain and India, which evokes that whole historical dynamic of Western power and subjugation over the East. With this in mind, a sub text could also be involved in the sense that 'we colonized the country so we have a right to colonize the clothes' otherwise why use this association when describing a fashion feature. However, the process may in reality be simpler, with again recourse to familiarity being of prominence. Significantly, what constitutes 'the familiar' is embedded in hegemonic knowledge as well as in interpellations to a hegemonic readership. As a captions writer for a 'mainstream' publication told me:

"My primary concern when formulating text is simplicity and catchiness..the best way to achieve that is to look at the content and subject matter, then take the cleverest but easiest and most familiar association I can think of and that will appeal to the majority of

readers...obviously, we don't want to offend anybody and would never do that deliberately but somewhere along the line it will happen but it can't be taken that seriously, after all we are in the field of entertainment not politics."

Emphasis on this process was particularly prevalent amongst the 'mainstream' magazine producers and although featured in the interviews with 'British Asian' producers did not constitute a particular emphasis. Crucially, in the first statement, the Raj is not only through historical knowledge linked to India, rather India is collapsed into 'the East' which is then related to 'the Raj' illustrating a tendency to homogenize the Other and increase the magnitude and impact of the colonizing force. This was something that most of the 'youth of Asian origin' highlighted when shown the first header and in particular pointed to the strategic use of 'the Raj' in keeping unequal power relations alive in contemporary times. *Akshay's* comment on the header here is reflective of many of their *oppositional* responses that again emphasises the importance of global commodification processes. As he states:

"...let's be honest here, what's the relevance of mentioning the Raj in this day and age, especially in what I'm presuming is a light hearted context...to remind everyone, just incase they've forgotten that Britain ruled the world or at least certain parts of the world once upon a time and because of that are superior to the rest of us.....it's also as if the East, as little or as much of it can be used at the will of the West to profit from us...which really means that we are still being ruled over today...if you think about it, we don't really have a say in things" (Akshay, 30yrs, accountant, self identifies as Asian).

Certainly, the use of "a touch" and "this season" in the first statement and "an Indian summer...this year" in the second reflects a certain limit, detachment and dismissiveness as if influence of 'the East' is minimal and a temporary state that can and will be discarded, reflecting the dispensable status of fashions in general, and perhaps ethnic minority trends in particular.

In comparison, most of the 'white youth' also pointed to the use of 'the Raj' in the header, however here, it was largely commented on in 'clever

and creative' terms or simply stating facts in an interesting way, as opposed to questioning its contextual relevance. As such these views serve to affirm the production motivations as indicated in the captions writer quote earlier as well as to reflect *dominant readings*, as the responses below illustrate:

"This is pretty clever really...to play on words and associations like that" (Anjie, 28yrs, IT recruitment officer, self identifies as British).

"...it's an inventive way of pointing to a historical fact, the Raj...I don't think it should be taken badly, after all, both countries do have links that go way back and both benefited in some way....besides, I've seen countless Indian restaurants called the Raj so it can't have been all that bad" (Sam, 18yrs, electrician, self identifies as English).

As I shall illustrate in Chapter 13, such views are inflected with further meaning when viewed in the biographical contexts of the 'white youth' whose narratives either make no reference to or seek to glamorise the historical link between Britain and India (e.g. see pg 229). This contrasts significantly with the 'youth of Asian origin' of which many narratives are hinged on the negative lasting impact of this dynamic for their contemporary lived realities (e.g. see pg 232).

At the same time, the dispensability within which 'the East' is framed in the header however was something that many of the 'white women' in the sample were keen to challenge, while ironically themselves presenting 'Asian culture' as a fad, albeit one they feel passion and desire for, throughout their narratives, which again is something I shall elaborate on in the next part of this thesis. As indicated in the previous chapter, this can be seen to represent *negotiated and self conscious readings*. As *Kathleen* states in response to the first header:

"....I don't like the way the Eastern stuff is made to seem like it's just for a season..I'm really into all the Indian things, the jewellery, food, music and all that, it's great being able to take part in it all whenever I want..." (Kathleen, 24yrs, masters student, self identifies as British).

3. Having Outsider Status

'Whose sari now?

The Asian Invasion is heading your way'
(The Sunday Times Style magazine / 23 Aug 1998 reporting on the influx of 'Asian Cool')

'Six young British Asians who are helping to change our perception of their culture'
(Now magazine / 2 June 99 featuring interviews with six young British Asians regarding 'Asian cool')

In both of the above headers, 'Asian' is depicted as and represents 'the Other'. The first statement makes this point overtly by using the word 'invasion' hence 'Asian' as a homogenised entity is presented, in the extreme, as a threatening force or at the very least, as an 'outsider.' Either way the implication is that this group is not really part of the 'inside' in the first place. Its Otherness is highlighted through the use of 'your way', presumably the white majority readership, which the 'Asian Invasion' is pitted against and therefore implicitly constructed as mutually exclusive. While the context and tone is of course very different, the language is reminiscent of terminology used in relation to new right race relations rhetoric when speaking of immigrants (e.g. 'swamping') and also in reference to black urban youth, especially during the eighties, in terms of a 'problem' and 'the alien wedge within' (Barker, 1981). In addition, the use of "sari" has no real value in the header and appears to be solely used for its instantly popular association with Asianness.

The second header is more subtle in constructing 'Asian' as the outsider, which becomes shielded through the use of "British Asians" who, to recall an earlier discussion may be seen as 'familiar strangers' (pg 47). However, by using words such as 'our' and 'their', the emphasis on difference is clear and boundaries of inclusion and exclusion are marked. Use of the word "our" crucially serves to create familiarity and solidarity between the writer (and thus the magazine) and a presumed 'British white' reader who is seen to represent the majority culture and implicitly,

the British nation. In the same vein, use of the word "their" in relation to the "six young British Asians" assumes that this group and those they represent are not part of, or not an *important part* of, the readership or the British nation, and are clearly established as 'the Other' and excluded. In addition, "helping to change our perception" firstly, again through the use of 'our' emphasises the 'us v them' dichotomy and secondly, implies that the prevailing perception of the British nation towards 'Asian culture' is a fixed and negative one. This is clearly something that the majority of 'white youths' when shown the second header identified with and offered a *dominant reading*. As *Andrew* says:

"I can relate to this because I've got lots of Asian friends now through University and work so I know more about them now...but at school, I didn't know any Asians so when you don't have knowledge about something, you can be fearful or ignorant of something that's different from you but making the effort to get to know things is good for everybody.."
(Andrew, 28, publishing executive, self identifies as British).

The importance of issues relating to knowledge, fear and also desire of difference have been cited at various points in this thesis and form central elements in conceptualizing 'the Other' which can be seen in particular through the narratives of many of the 'white youths' in the interview sample, as I discuss further in Part Five (see Chapter 14 in particular).

In direct contrast to Andrew's view, and reflecting my earlier point, while two 'youths of Asian origin' felt that the header performed a positive function in attempting to include Asians within British society, the majority felt alienated and patronised by the header. Above all it was not seen as speaking *to* them, but *about* them, that resulted in mainly *oppositional readings* that are rooted in *a defensive distancing* from the host society as a response to *exclusion*. As *Raveena* asserts:

"This one is just completely condescending...it's like we're desperate to be accepted by white society, I mean, who cares what their perception of us is, I don't...this just uses the Asians who are supposedly changing perceptions as tools to make our culture more acceptable for white people...it's not for us at all, like we have no real claim in Britain"
(Raveena, 30yrs, marketing manager, self identifies as Asian Sikh).

As I shall illustrate further (see Chapter 13 in particular) this is typical of views that emerged through the narratives of many of the 'youths of Asian origin' who in the face of negative perceptions and discrimination feel excluded from Britain. Subsequently, alienation from their country of birth becomes a bridge to their country of origin, of which they express greater affinity despite, in some instances, never having been there.

4. Implying Primitiveness

'The Indian thing rages on-wrap a sari round your trousers for a funky take on the Eastern look, keep the rest of your outfit modern though. We're talking subtle here'
(Now magazine 2 June 1999)

'Its an Indian summer as the most stylish women wrap up in saris'
(Hello! No. 676 August 21 2001)

In a similar vein to a statement discussed earlier in this chapter (see pg 184) "The Indian thing" in the first header lends an air of dismissiveness and objectification ("thing") to it. In addition, "an Indian summer," apart from relying on associations of India or 'the East' in general with heat (which may explain the heightened popularity of 'Asian culture' during the British summer months) in the second header, points to its temporality.

The first statement is particularly interesting as the magazine occupies the position of style authority in declaring that a "funky take on the Eastern look" constitutes the acceptable and desired style. This implies that the addition of traditionally Western garments, for example, trousers or jeans makes "the Indian thing", "funky" "modern" and "subtle" therefore in light of this, wearing Indian or Eastern clothes (which are collapsed into one and the same) in its entirety is traditional, primitive and brash. While Indian clothes or "the Indian thing" may appear to be the focus of the header, what is actually being promoted is, without even mentioning it,

the superior status and importance of the West in matters of style. Further, the magazine's position clearly aims to speak to, or guide a 'white readership' in how best to incorporate the "Indian thing" into their wardrobes. This is precisely what many of the 'white women' in the interview sample took from this header that was shown to them reflecting a *dominant reading* that again is entwined with *self consciousness*. This is illustrated through the following responses:

"It's true...that's what I do, mix and match Indian with Western stuff, I'd never wear a whole Indian outfit...it's not about stealing anything you know..."
(Charlene, 20yrs, bar worker, self identifies as British).

"...this is good advice, I wear jeans with a sari top or some ethnic jewellery cause I don't want to look odd...so it's just abit here and there...nothing over the top, oh no..." (Julia, 18yrs, hairdresser, self identifies as English).

It is interesting to note as a point of gender differentiation that while the women in general expressed animated responses and interest in this header, men across ethnicity offered very brief responses. Of course, this also reflects the female gender bias and limitation of the selection of magazine sources, which in the main do not aim to speak to 'the male reader' (see pg 147 for earlier discussion on this methodological issue). However, in the main, the men across ethnicity expressed a sense that the header sought to promote cultural fusion through style, albeit with the 'men of Asian origin' leaning more towards a sceptical view of this, highlighting a combination of *dominant and negotiated readings*. However, it was the 'women of Asian origin' who were especially provoked by the header and responded in *oppositional* terms that again can be linked to a form of cultural *defence and protection*, as reflected in the comments below:

" ...magazines are full of this kind of thing that basically says Western clothes are better than Eastern clothes..." (Mia, 27yrs, teacher, self identifies as Indian).

"Oh so if you don't wrap the sari around your jeans, then that's not the done thing...so by implication then all the Asian women who wear saris as they are supposed to wear them, that's without jeans, have no fashion sense and are backward...while I love mixing different styles myself, I find that quite offensive" (Riza, 25yrs, fashion designer, self identifies as British Asian).

Such responses gain in meaning when viewed in conjunction with the narratives of many of the 'women of Asian origin' in the interview sample who acknowledge that they do not wear 'Asian' or 'Indian' clothes on a daily basis. In addition, if they do it is generally 'mixed' with something else and only on 'special occasions' is a 'complete Indian outfit' donned. Therefore, while lived realities of dress may echo the practice of what is being advocated in the header, negative responses are drawn towards the implied superiority of West over East coded through style that engenders a 'cultural defence', as shall be elaborated on in Part Five (e.g. see pg 259).

While transmitting essentially the same meaning as the first header, the second statement is more subtle. However, the manner in which the sentence is structured and its tone serves to pose 'most stylish' *against* 'saris' which is something one just 'wraps up' in. In my reading of this, it was as if there was an invisible 'even' placed between 'as' and 'the' making the statement thus:

'It's an Indian summer as <u>even</u> the most stylish women wrap up in saris'

It should be noted that the original source of this header was accompanied by several pictures of familiar Western, 'most stylish' women (e.g. Goldie Hawn) dressed in saris, which may have added to this personal interpretation. However, even without this visual aid, the fact that this is a mainstream Western magazine, that regularly features and reveres Western celebrities provides an important contextual background to the header.

Through both statements, binary positionings of 'East' and 'West' are reinforced' through the placing of the latter in a position of authority, power, privilege and modernity. As I shall illustrate, these hegemonic positionings are often reproduced explicitly and implicitly through the discourses of 'British Asian' magazines, which constitute the focus of the next chapter.

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Summary

In this chapter I have attempted to convey the powerful and insidious use of discourse in order to reinforce relations that are hinged on orientalist power dynamics. For instance, I have illustrated how language (in terms of substance and format) is constructed in order to promote Western superiority (through modernity) versus Eastern traditionalism (through spirituality). I have also drawn attention to the particular emphasis on the use of 'familiar associations' (e.g. India/East with 'the Raj') when formulating discourse amongst the 'British mainstream' magazine staff that I interviewed. The message that is also conveyed through these 'mainstream' representations is that selected elements of 'Asian culture' can attractively be incorporated into a hegemonic lifestyle that retains its position as 'normal'. Further, 'Asian people' themselves come to be detached from these cultural elements and/or are excluded from the British nation through discursively presenting them as different from and outside of the mainstream. This reflects the viewing of Asians as 'familiar strangers' within a spectrum of Otherness (e.g. see pg 47 for earlier discussion on this). Here once again there emerges a split in responses between 'white youth' and 'youth of Asian' origin with the former largely accepting hegemonic representations as 'truths' while the latter are seeking to challenge these representations by placing them within the realm of white, Western racialized knowledge.

Chapter 12: 'British Asian' Magazine Discourse

1. Harmonious fusions

'A lot of mainstream fashion today is a good fusion of East and West. Designers on both sides each get their inspiration from one another's culture...'
(Eastern Eye Magazine/Nov 19 1999)

'east meets west
Eastern fashion, which once upon a time was traditional, has now become sexy and sensuous. Indian designers may continue to follow trends usually forecasted in the west but fusion is now a trend that is going to stay with us for some time.'
(Snoop /Nov-Dec 2002)

The first piece of text implies fusion of styles on an equal footing however the structure of language serves to highlight difference and emphasise binaries i.e. "East and West" "one another's culture" "on both sides". This was something that was also identified by many of the youths (across gender and ethnicity) whose responses to the first statement straddled between *negotiated and oppositional readings*. For instance, as *Daniel* says:

"I liked this because it's positive and progressive but at the same time, there's a sense of opposing sides coming together through fashion...well that's how I took it anyway....which is obviously a good thing but why does there have to be separation, or any sides in the first place, even for clothes and fashion stuff...it's silly really.." (Daniel, 18yrs, DJ, self identifies as British).

A similar response was evoked from *Raveena* in relation to the statement:

"....initially, I thought this was good, all happy and together but then really it made me just think of differences relating to cultures and geography that extends everywhere, even to fashion....no wonder there are so many

problems around the world because we all think in terms of this side or that side...I'm including myself in that"
(Raveena, 30yrs, marketing manager, self-identifies as Asian Sikh).

However, there were notable differences both within and across gender and ethnic divisions, where responses aimed to qualify the 'truth' of the statement, which was interestingly taken up by all the women and only two of the men, both of whom were of Asian origin. However, within this, it was largely the 'white women' who demonstrated *dominant readings* while agreeing and identifying with the statement, in particular with the element of "good fusion" between East and West, a sentiment that was also reflected through many of their narratives (as I discuss in the next part of this thesis). On the other hand, all the 'Asian women' chose to disagree with the claims of the statement to a greater or lesser extent, displaying *oppositional readings* that are rooted in *awareness and experience of unequal power relations*. As *Riza*, a fashion designer herself said:

"umm it's a nice idea, but I don't think it's really like that at all mainly because there is such a different value attached to Western fashion compared to Eastern fashion in global terms ... so that when a Western designer comes out with a sari...suddenly that's 'the sari'...you know, whereas designers in Bombay, for example who do that sort of thing all the time, get no recognition on the world fashion stage...so I think to use the word fusion is abit optimistic, it's more true, I think that mainstream fashion is really Western fashion and always will be and it can take from others whenever it chooses and make out like its created it" (Riza, 25yrs,self identifies as British Asian).

This is reflective of many of the biographies of the 'women of Asian origin', who demonstrated a largely cynical view of notions of 'fusion' that instead were viewed in terms of white majority 'muscling in' or 'taking over'. This, in terms of the majority of 'youths of Asian origin' in general was seen to be enveloped in historically unequal power relations between 'black' and 'white' and contemporary processes of cultural commodification (e.g. see page 252).

The second piece of discourse, while again highlighting fusion, takes a different angle through a greater emphasis on Western styles being brought to Eastern fashion, as opposed to vice versa. The implication through use of language is that the introduction of Western trends to Eastern/Indian (which are collapsed into one and the same during the course of the sub-header) fashion has impacted to update something anciently ('once upon a time') "traditional" into something modern and attractive, expressed through the use of adjectives, "sexy and sensuous." As with the mainstream discourses reviewed earlier, the West is linked with modernism, while India / the East with traditionalism. While fusion is highlighted, again emphasis is on difference and binaries through, for instance the foregrounding of "east" "west" ('meets' is presented in a smaller and lighter coloured font in the original source) plus, as mentioned above, the implied differences between Eastern and Western fashions.

Overall, the overt tone of such discourses is celebratory of fusion styles, which is in some contrast to those below, although they are taken from the same publication, illustrating varying and sometimes contradictory discourse positionings at any given time.

2. Disharmonious fusions

'flying the Asian flag
Amrik Chaggar flew the 'cool Asian' flag at London fashion week at a time when the Western world no longer thinks it's 'cool' to be Asian.'
(Snoop Dec/Jan 2002)

'indian summary
The bottom line for summer is: Bollywood rocks.
Revive your wardrobe with staggeringly exuberant clothes and show 'em how it's done....Reclaim the Indian summer.'
(Snoop May/Jun 2002)

In contrast to the previous pieces of discourse, both these pieces of text serve to mock the nature of Asian cultural reverence in the West, highlighted particularly in the first header through the way "cool Asian" is placed in quotation marks. The text makes explicit the temporality of Asian popularity in the West, a fad status that is in Western control, which has the power to decide when 'Asian' is in vogue i.e. "the Western world no longer thinks it's 'cool' to be Asian." In light of this, the text implicitly champions what is apparently (through name) an Asian designer in a mainstream, Western arena i.e. "London fashion week".

The latter text, although from the same source some six months later, highlights the now apparent popularity of Asianness (perhaps itself an indication of the fickle and changeable nature of popular culture) under the label of 'Bollywood' yet the message of the text has nothing to do with 'Bollywood' itself. Rather it incorporates a challenge to Western appropriation of Asianness and the successfulness of this message depends on an assumed knowledge of the reader (presumably young British Asian) in relation to the proliferation of 'Asian culture' in the West. Thus the text speaks to the Asian reader in terms of "your wardrobe" "show 'em how it's done" and particularly significant, "reclaim the Indian summer". In other words, through the assumed knowledge imparted to the expected reader of this British Asian publication, the text implores the Asian reader to "show 'em" (i.e. them, highly likely to be referring to the English, white, Western) how Asianness is really "done" through their authentic recourse to Asian culture, further substantiated by the last words, "reclaim your Indian summer". To reclaim would mean to be the original 'owner' of something that has been borrowed or taken by those not worthy, in this case "the Indian summer" which could stand in for 'Asian culture' in general and its devouring by the West. Significantly, what has been identified here as the preferred meaning of the second header, was also noted across youth responses. However, it was largely the 'youth of Asian origin' who this magazine aims to 'speak to' that liked and identified with the message. *Shalini's* response is indicative here of these *dominant readings*, as she says:

"This one is cool...I liked this because it's true...it's our culture, our clothes, our films...it's a reminder that we should be leading the way, not them...."
(Shalini, 20yrs, student, self-identifies as Indian).

A response that seeks to reinforce binary positionings gains in significance when viewed in relation to many of the biographies of the 'youth of Asian origin' which (as highlighted earlier) are centred on experiences of racism and exclusion. 'Asian culture' then becomes a fixed 'thing' to be owned and protected against 'them', i.e. the white majority (e.g. see pg 224).

This is contrasted with some ambivalence amongst the 'white youth' towards the second header, with many of the women displaying contradictory responses of confusion, self consciousness and defence, reflecting a combination of *dominant and negotiated readings*. Significantly most of the men were largely defensive and in some cases quite angered by the statement and challenging of its meaning, displaying largely *oppositional readings* that were rooted in a *narrow conception of the nation*. In *Sam's* words:

"...I didn't really know what to make of this, it's pretty rude really...I'm not being funny but all this Bollywood stuff, it's great yeah and I go to the Bollywood nights now and again with friends, but at the end of the day, it's only been in Britain a short while whereas British people, I mean English...you know whose Grandparents were born here, have always been here so I think all the newer cultures that have come here, have got to be prepared to share and welcome that sharing.....we don't need to be shown how it's done, we don't need to be shown anything"
(Sam, 18yrs, electrician, self identifies as English).

Once again, such a response needs to be seen in light of biographies, in particular those of the 'white males' in the sample, that reflect a lived experience of being part of the normalised dominant majority amidst a multicultural context. What emerges are ambivalent feelings revolving around 'desire and fear' that were manifested in the quest for 'knowledge about' the Other or an emphasis on 'authentic' national belonging and

subsequently 'the right' to knowledge about the Other, as I shall elaborate on in the next part of this thesis (e.g. see pg 269).

3. A Twist on the West

'40's Bollywood beauty
Nargis
While the West had Garbo, Monroe and Bacall, we had Nargis-and to most people, she was all we needed.'
(Asian Woman / Summer 2001)

'LADY Chatterjee's(red font) Lovers
The likes of Jaan, Raishma and Chiffons have gone back in time to update the classic corset with an Eastern twist. Dhabka work, diamontes and beads truly take the corset to another dimension.'
(Asian Woman/Winter 2001)

'punk funk
killer stilletoe heels with buckles and straps are essential for the new asian punk...'
(Asian Woman/Winter 2001)

All the pieces of discourse above, taken from the same publication, *Asian Woman*, use a foundation of Britishness / Westernness through the following symbols: Punk; D H Lawrence's famed literary character, Lady Chatterley and popular culture icons such as Marilyn Monroe. Built upon this is an Asian dimension, as if Asianness can simply be added on to Britishness while also implying that Asianness in itself is separate from these British/Western symbols. Therefore, Britishness and Asianness are positioned as necessarily distinctive and different categories. Thus the target group of this publication, the 'Asian female' reader can have the "new asian punk"; the female heroine Chatterley becomes "Chatterjee" therefore more Asian-friendly and for every Western female icon, the 'Asian female' reader has an Asian one, in this case Indian actress,

"Nargis", who is not only paralleled but implied as being superior to the Western screen icons. This is presumably because she is Asian and this is Asian Woman magazine aimed at Asian women, therefore no further qualification is necessary. The importance of championing 'Asian minority' positionings within a 'white majority' society was emphasised by a British Asian magazine features writer, I spoke to, as she says:

"...you see it's very important that young Asians have Asian role models even though they are born in Britain, and that the older generation can identify with the Asian faces and names they grew up with years ago while living in Britain today and I do feel that responsibility because the young ones are going to get role models anyway, from TV, sport, films, fashion but if we're honest, they are going to be largely European...they need to know that there are and always have been cool, intelligent, beautiful, famous Asians and if we don't bring that to them so that they can have pride in what they are, where they come from, who will?"

However, what is being performed through these discourses is not all that different to the 'mainstream' magazine pieces of text that have been discussed earlier (see Chapter 11). The texts here build on a foundation of Britishness through giving an Eastern/Asian twist, as do the positions of the mainstream magazines in their presentation of 'Asian culture'. Britishness and 'the West' retain central positions in both cases and by the same token Asianness in both cases is something that can be added on to give a different or familiar (depending on ethnic/cultural positioning) flavour. In addition, inspite of the apparent fusion of cultural elements promoted through these discourses, once again what is emphasised implicitly are the binaries of East and West as well as the implicit view that Asian and British are not necessarily synonymous through, in particular, the following taken from the first header:

"While the West had Garbo, Monroe and Bacall, we had Nargis-and to most people, she was all we needed."

This is significant as through use of the word 'we' in alignment with the Indian actress, Nargis, the Asian publication seeks to align itself with the Asian reader who is then placed in opposition to the West and its icons, which the Asian reader is not seen as part of.

This inclusionary/exclusionary message was identified by many of the 'youths of Asian origin' and in a small number of cases challenged, demonstrating *oppositional readings* to an extent. As *Anil* said succinctly when shown the header:

"...can't we have both...why do we have to choose, I certainly grew up with both" (Anil, 26yrs, teacher, self identifies as Asian).

Of particular interest however were those responses amongst the 'youth of Asian origin' that while identifying and having knowledge of all the icons mentioned, in some cases, *more* in terms of the Western icons, chose to agree with the statement's encoding of an either/or positioning. These mainly *dominant readings* again tie in with a view of 'Asian' as 'some thing' to be protected and revered, by virtue of its and their own Asianness. As *Shalini* says:

"...Oh I just love those old films, I've got a whole collection of Monroe's films, she was lovely...I've seen a few of Nargis' films, my favourite is 'Barsaat'...her and Raj Kapoor were great together...to be honest, I don't think I've really seen many of her films.... but she was brilliant of course, an Asian legend, better than any American actress...completely untouchable" (Shalini, 20yrs, student, self identifies as Indian).

Conversely there was much less identification with this header amongst the 'white youth' as of course they do not constitute the expected readership of the source publication. However, while a couple of the women knew of Nargis, in terms of having seen pictures of her, the majority didn't and this was presented in apologetic terms. Significantly this highlights, amongst the interviewees, assumptions regarding my alignments and role within the research study, which (as emphasised on pg 111) must be acknowledged as a potentially influencing factor in both the types of responses given to visual discourses and the narratives offered. Identification and animated responses from the women emerged strongly in relation to the Western icons and issue was taken with the implied meaning of the message that Asian people 'didn't have' the same

identification, therefore both *negotiated and oppositional readings* emerged.

Also of interest is that the majority of men across ethnicity demonstrated *oppositional readings* that can be seen to be rooted in *gender considerations*. This is reflected in their assertion of legendary male film actors, often going into detail about favourite films and performances, as opposed to actually commenting on the female screen icons mentioned in the header. While the 'men of Asian origin' cited both Western and Asian male icons, the 'white males' in the main cited Western icons such as Brando and McQueen, who interestingly in a few cases was paralleled with mentions of Amitabh Buchan. This may be a reflection of global awareness and Buchan's international fame rather than actual 'knowledge' as none of the men that mentioned him had seen a film of his, but for example had seen him on 'some TV programme' or knew he was famous because 'his waxwork was in Madame Tussauds.'

4. Western yardsticks

'BRITT ASIAN
We've all dreamed of being a Bond Girl. But this Bond Girl wants to be like us. Infact, Britt Ekland wishes she had an arranged marriage.'
(Asian Woman / winter 2001)

'Ritu Beri-the famous fashion designer from the East who was recently signed to the same company as that famous fashion designer from the West, Stella McCartney-showcased her latest collection earlier this year.'
(Snoop-Dec/Jan 2002)

These two pieces of text give importance, perhaps even a superior positioning to the West and Western celebrities, in various ways: Firstly, the feature on Britt Ekland, which significantly is titled "BRITT ASIAN", a play on name and identity that indicates on one level, her association and even identification with Asianness and secondly, on a general level

combines two already familiar themes of Asian Woman magazine, British and Asian. The first point is further substantiated in the remainder of the header that asserts how Britt, despite being a Bond Girl "wants to be like us". The power of the assertion relies on the connotations associated with being a Bond Girl, in terms of 'freedom', 'glamour', 'desirability' (coupled with the fact that the vast majority of Bond Girls have been white and Western) and that inspite of being seen as representing such facets, she still "wants to be like us". Therefore the text aligns itself with the reader, as in 'Britt Ekland wants to be like us Asian women'. This is further illustrated through the latter part of the text that states: "Infact Britt Ekland wishes she had an arranged marriage" which is important on two levels. Firstly it serves to provide some endorsement to arranged marriages via the liberated, Western, glamorous Bond Girl's wish. Secondly, in terms of the sequence of discourse, arranged marriage follows on from "like us" therefore depicting arranged marriages as synonymous with 'Asian women' and 'Asian culture', an implication that was also picked up by the youths when shown this header. However this was challenged predominantly by the 'Asian women' of the sample who demonstrated *oppositional readings* but not by any of the 'white youths', who reflected *dominant readings*. As *Raveena* states:

"...in particular what annoyed me about this was the way being Asian, and in particular, an Asian woman is shown as going hand in hand with an arranged marriage...it's so outdated and something you'd expect from a white magazine...I mean, I'm assuming this is an Asian magazine.....because of the content and the way it's presented but really in what's being said, it might as well be Marie Claire or one of those magazines that always have a feature on other cultures...you know what I mean don't you...this just confirms all the stereotypes and it's ridiculous...I'm 30, happily single and enjoying my career and no-one is trying to get me married off..."
(Raveena, 30yrs, marketing manager, self identifies as Asian Sikh).

In general, the majority of men and women of Asian origin found the header to be 'condescending' towards Asians and ingratiating towards Britt Ekland (who according to many of the youths, across gender and

ethnic divisions was 'hardly a really famous actress') and by implication, whiteness in general. Conversely, while most of the white youths also felt the statement served to elevate Britt Ekland, in general the message of the header was seen as having a positive impact on how 'Asian culture' was seen in the West. For example, as *Julian* says:

"I only know her from one Bond film I think, the name sounds familiar but I can't remember her but I suppose it doesn't matter...it's just good that a known Westerner is saying good things about Asian culture and people...that can only be seen as good for both Asians, because they can feel prouder and white people, because they can be more open minded and less ignorant...I think it sends out a good message that arranged marriages aren't necessarily bad"
(Julian, 21yrs,student, self identifies as British).

What is significant about the second piece of text, apart from the reinforcing of the familiar East and West binary, is that while "Ritu Beri" is identified as a "famous fashion designer", her importance and success is not deemed enough within herself, rather she needs to be given validation in terms of her association with Western designer, "Stella McCartney". In addition, although the discourse seeks to emphasise the commonality between the two through the "company" they are both signed to, it serves to highlight binary positionings through an emphasis on "East" and "West". Through the arrangement and use of language, the Western designer assumes the normalised position and benchmark of success.

5. Questioning Exclusions and Stereotypes

'Are Asian models invisible?
The pages of this magazine are filled with beautiful Asian models. So why do we never see them in mainstream fashion glossies?'
(Asian Woman/Autumn 2000)

'Invasian of the news readers
They may be serious, they may have really Indian sounding names like George, and they may be able to mention Russian leaders to perfection yet fail miserably at pronouncing Hindi film titles but what the hell at least they're Asian...'
(Snoop June/July 01)

'In the driving seat
Asian women are no longer watching Jaguars zoom past from the passenger seat of their husband's car. They are now building them..'
(Asian Woman/Winter 2001)

The first piece of text overtly enters the area of questioning exclusion without using the actual terms of exclusion and discrimination however the issue is broached through the question of the 'invisibility of Asian models'. This is then answered immediately in the affirmative through the sub-header that relates this 'invisibility' to "mainstream fashion glossies" specifically as opposed to Asian Woman magazine, which is "filled with beautiful Asian models". Therefore the problem or questioning is directed specifically at 'mainstream' fashion magazines, owned by and implicitly aimed at the ethnic majority. As has been noted elsewhere, the absence and/or marginality of Black models in general constitutes an important area of racialized exclusion within the mainstream fashion industry (see pg 21 and Jobling, 1999). However, as a 'British Asian' model told me, discriminatory practice also occurs at the margins, as she says:

" It's hard to get jobs in mainstream magazines, any black or Asian model will tell you that, it's no surprise...I've been to a few castings and it's always the same thing, 'oh your look isn't what we're looking for right now'... That's not all, I've been to castings for Asian magazines or fashion shows and have been told several times 'we're not going for the dark look this issue, maybe the next one'...it's a fact that lighter skinned Asian models or even those that don't look especially Asian get booked more for Asian magazines... so this kind of racism is all around the industry in some form (Priyanka, 22yrs).

The second piece of text, albeit in a more subtle and tongue in cheek manner, also approaches the issue of Asian exclusion. Notable immediately from the header is the twisting of the word 'invasion' to 'invasian' therefore highlighting 'Asian' immediately while retaining the original meaning. This together with the humorous approach of the header in general, while making an important point was something that was highlighted and appreciated across youth responses to the header, that were largely characterized in terms of *dominant readings*. As *Andrew* says:

"This is clever ...it's funny but on the ball at the same time"
(Andrew, 28yrs, publishing executive, identifies as British).

The sub-header is especially interesting for it seeks to poke fun and question the 'authenticity' of these Asian newsreaders, through sarcastically pointing to anglicised names and inability to speak Hindi correctly. However the implication is that these things can be overlooked for the purposes of inclusion, because "at least they're Asian". This is significant because it implicitly points to the lack of Asian newsreaders in the 'mainstream arena' and is clearly positive about their "invasion". This is something that the 'youth of Asian origin' in general agreed with, as *Salman* says:

"I was laughing at some bits of this....it's well written but true as well, you don't see that many non white faces on TV, especially doing serious things so we've got to support the ones we've got"
(Salman, 24yrs, property developer, self identifies as British Asian).

However, while *dominant readings* in the main emerged amongst the 'white youth', the header also provoked a more complex reaction in certain cases that leaned away from prioritising ethnicity. Here there emerged some *oppositional readings* that may be seen as reflective of a *dominant ethnic positioning and experience*, as *Carla* says:

"I liked this one, it's pretty clever but I don't know if I actually agree with what's being said, I see quite a few Asian and black newsreaders on the British and American channels and they're good at their job...so that's the

main thing, there should be newsreaders that are good at their job not there because they're white, Asian or black....that's not right any way you look at it." (Carla, 30yrs, lawyer, self identifies as British).

Finally, in a similar vein to Image 4 from the same source, *Asian Woman,* (discussed earlier on pg 175) the third header seeks to assert both within and outside the 'Asian community' the active, empowered 'Asian female'. This serves as a counter to popular constructions of the Asian female as passive and dependent in historical and Western conceptions (e.g. see pg 18). However, Asian constructions themselves may also reinforce such images as can be seen in the headers by the same publication again, *Asian Woman* (e.g. pgs 201;209) on 'arranged marriages' as normalised. This reflects the often complex and contradictory positionings of a magazine in general, and a minority publication in particular, that become tied to issues of cultural representation and responsibility. As a British Asian magazine editorial editor told me:

"It's hard on so many levels because you want to and feel you should be representing a minority culture that is your own in the best possible light and being empowering wherever you can be because the mainstream isn't going to do that, but at the same time, we are journalists and there has to be a degree of objectivity. Things do go on in our culture, like in any culture that's not particularly pleasant or trendy but it's there and we've got to talk about it...but say, we run articles on arranged marriages or child marriages etc, we get sack loads of complaint letters, and what's more many of the letters blatantly show that the whole article hasn't been read....we try to give a balanced viewpoint, you can't sweep things under a carpet because they don't look good, at the same time we have no intention of running our people or culture down."

In light of this, it is significant to note the responsibility attributed to Asian cultural producers in terms of representing the 'Asian community' accurately and free from stereotypes. This was consistently highlighted within the narratives of the 'youth of Asian origin' who strongly felt that 'their representation' needed to go beyond just 'being seen', as I shall discuss in the next part of this thesis (e.g. see pg 249).

'Queen Victorious
The true tale of Lakshmi Bai, the Rani of Jhansi
Forget all that exotic and noble jewel in The Crown shit. The truth is the British presence in India was all about murder, rape, pillage, stirring up communal tension and bleeding a country-which was one of the richest in the world when the British first arrived-dry! One of these people who stood up to the might of British tyranny was a courageous young queen called Lakshmi Bai, the Rani of Jhansi...'
(Snoop Oct/Nov 2001)

This lengthy piece of discourse explicitly invokes a history of British colonialism and its negative impact on India, which is again done in the tongue in cheek manner, strategically characteristic of this particular magazine. This is immediately apparent from the opening line of "Queen Victorious" which serves to oust the known Queen of the Raj (Queen Victoria) and instead champion the courage of an Indian queen who fought against the Raj, popularly known as the "Rani of Jhansi" who is thus "Queen Victorious".

The aim of the text is to expose the 'truth' of the British presence in India as opposed to the well documented and orientalist knowledge of the British-India dynamic, famously captured in films claiming to capture the essence of the period, such as "jewel in the crown". The impact of the message therefore assumes readership knowledge of at least India's pronounced status as the most important part of the British Empire, if not the film itself and then seeks to mock it and present this as a lie or 'myth'. Rather, "the truth" is presented as being that of extreme oppression in terms of crimes such as "murder" "rape" "pillage" fuelling tensions and exploitation. What is significant is that no evidence or substantiating information is needed, the power of the message lies in its claim to challenge what passes as 'accepted knowledge' and the direct and horror

inducing use of words, often one-worded. This is all enveloped and made safe within the British Asian publication and the young British Asian readership to which it is aimed.

My point is substantiated by the differences in responses to this header between the youths across ethnic groups. *Rajesh's* comments are reflective of positions taken up by the 'youth of Asian origin' who all chose to speak about this piece of text first and to accept the message, demonstrating *dominant readings*.

"This is written in a funny way but it's very serious and stating the hard facts and I'm sure its hard for white people to stomach but this is what they've done throughout history in lots of countries and we can't be expected to forget that and while it's not very nice, it's good to see the truth in black and white for a change" (Rajesh,19yrs,student,self identifies as Indian).

As already highlighted, such a response needs to be viewed in relation to many of the narratives of 'youth of Asian origin' that seek to trace contemporary experiences of racial exclusion back to colonial relations between Britain and India. Here any specifics and ambivalences are not deemed relevant, just the 'knowledge' that Britain ruled India is enough to shape their attitudes and perceptions of Britain, as I discuss further in the next part of this thesis (e.g. see page 227). In contrast, 4 out of 10 'white youths' chose to speak about this piece of discourse last and expressed feelings of embarrassment and regret at Britain's colonial past. This was demonstrated through *dominant readings* that reflected an unquestioning acceptance of the header's message. However the majority, especially the men responded in *oppositional* terms which may be viewed in relation to narrative constructions that have either glossed over Empire/historical relations or in certain instances, glorified them within a masculinist discourse. It is also significant that here the 'humorous' tone of the discourse was not appreciated as it had been earlier. As *Sam* says:

"I can't say I liked this that much and although I admit I don't know the ins and outs of the history, there must have been some good for India, with the British there....like education, for instance...it can't all have been so terrible...surely and where are the facts and figures anyway, to say something like this, there has to be stuff to back it up....and besides, if it was so bad then why are so many Asians living in Britain then so it's abit hypocritical really while trying to be clever and dress it up in funny language but I don't find it funny"
(Sam, 18yrs, electrician, self identifies as English)

7. Self-Orientalism

'KARMA CHAMELEON
JOIN THE CULTURE CLUB WITH THESE SUMPTUOUS SILKS IN VIBRANT SHADES.'
(Asian Woman / Winter 2001)

'Mixed blessings
When you've shunned the arranged marriage and found your own Mr Right, convincing your family can be an uphill task. But what happens when you find love with someone outside of your culture...'
(Asian Woman/ Summer 2001)

'For a taste of the Orient, the latest prints from Sequinze are simply irresistible....there's never been a better time to order a Chinese take-away...'
(Asian Woman/ Summer 2000)

The first piece of text involves various plays on words and associations. The word and notion of "Karma" has regularly been linked to Indian and or Eastern cultures through a means of flippancy in Western popular culture. This is intrinsically linked to representations of the East in one dimensional terms of 'spirituality', as has been illustrated at various points in this thesis. The association of "Chameleon" to "Karma" invokes a song of eighties British band 'Culture Club' which itself assumes part of the

sub-header. In addition, "sumptuous" and "vibrant" in relation to 'culture' also adheres to well known conceptions of the East.

The second piece of text also adheres to popular conceptions of the East and specifically 'Asian culture', that of the "arranged marriage". The text aims to speak directly to the reader through the use of: "you've" "your" "you" as if they have/are experiencing these things themselves, through assuming the reader to be an Asian woman. From this, 'Asian women' *automatically* have arranged marriages to deal with and family to struggle against.

The third piece of text significantly performs an Othering and orientalizing process of the East, which the magazine separates itself out from through specifying "the Orient". This is used here in its contemporary and popular understanding of reference to East Asia as opposed to orientalist conceptualizations of the Orient as euphemism for the East in general.

The text plays up to popular conceptions by collapsing the Orient into Chinese; the linkages with food and in particular "Chinese take-away" fulfilling stereotypes of Chinese as restauranteurs and normalised Western practices of 'going for a Chinese'. The implication being that a Chinese outfit /style / identity can just as easily be bought / taken on (via the style advice of Asian Woman magazine) as getting a "Chinese take-away". As such, the discourse positions the British Asian magazine and British Asian readership, both defined in South Asian terms, within frames of dominance and authority over East Asian cultural products. In this sense, the British Asian magazine aligns itself with the position of the 'mainstream' discourses, reviewed in the previous chapter. This is substantiated by the fact that the majority of youths incorrectly identified this piece of text as emanating from a 'mainstream' publication. This practice reflects the complexities involved in discourses of orientalism and Othering that point to the heterogeneity 'within' those areas and peoples that come to be homogenized through orientalism (as indicated earlier on pg 79). This heterogeneity may be played out in specific

instances through an emphasis on 'difference' and the exercising of power through the centring of 'the Self' even though that Self may have been historically constructed as Other in hegemonic terms. Further, this very process of the latter may create an environment and mentality where instances involving the ability to exercise 'power over' something or someone is seized upon.

Therefore, surprisingly in light of reported comments through the course of the thesis but not so surprising in view of the above, none of the 'youth of Asian origin', when shown this header, read or chose to read or chose to present the stereotypical connotations of the message. Rather it was the 'clever use of language' linked to 'cultural elements' that was highlighted again and again demonstrating *dominant readings*. However, as can be seen from the discussion during this part of the thesis, stereotypes emerging from what was perceived as the 'white majority' *against* 'Asian culture' was consistently identified and condemned through oppositional readings. This is intrinsically linked to practices of cultural 'self-protection' as I discuss further in the next part of this thesis (see Chapter 14).

The inventive use of language was also commented on by many of the 'white youths' however here there was some drawing out of cultural stereotyping although this remained largely unchallenged. Here there occurred some element of *negotiated readings,* as *Charlene* says:

"...this was a catchy one, short and sweet....it does make out that Chinese people only own restaurants though although I suppose there are a lot of Chinese restaurants...and the concept just works with the whole thing" (Charlene,20yrs,bar worker, self identifies as British).

Certainly the precedence placed on creative language and associations in formulating ideas and concepts for magazines constituted something that was highlighted by both British 'mainstream' and Asian magazine

producers. However, this was especially prevalent amongst the former, for instance, as a mainstream magazine captions writer told me:

"...it's pretty simple really, you have a story or a feature or a picture and you need something short, dynamic and instant.....it's got to grab the reader straight away and they've got to know exactly what you're talking about through that one caption....it doesn't have to be anything very deep....infact the simpler the better, after all, it's just some words and pictures and bringing them together for the reader in as catchy way as possible..."

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Summary

This chapter has illustrated the multifaceted character of discursive self-representations that (as with 'British Asian' visual images/Chapter 10) highlight ambivalent and contradictory positionings. For instance, on the one hand, there is the privileging of Western markers that mirror 'mainstream' discourses of orientalist stereotypes of Asianness. Here, whiteness and 'the West' retain centrality allowing Asianness to be 'added on' at will. There is also evidence of the reproduction of orientalist frameworks in discourse on 'other Asian cultures' that serves to place South Asianness in a position of dominance. However, there are also representations that seek to challenge racial and gendered exclusions as well as challenges to the commodification of 'Asian Culture', through serious and/or humorous discourse. However, it is significant to note that through language construction, binary positions of East and West; British and Asian are reinforced through both types of representations. These contradictory constructions reflect the particularly difficult situation within which 'Asian cultural producers' work and attention has been drawn in this chapter to their often conflicting agendas. On the one hand, these agendas may seek to empower Asians through, for instance, promoting 'Asian role models' and avoiding cultural stereotypes. However, this cultural responsibility that comes from a minority positioning is juxtaposed

with attempts to maintain objective journalistic practice that may offend the 'cultural community'.

Ambivalent reader responses were also most marked here with some evidence of challenges to representations (across gender and ethnicity) that served to position groups/entities in opposition (e.g. East and West). However patterns that again highlight a split between 'white youth' and 'youth of Asian origin' can be identified which are as follows: Firstly, discursive statements that challenged orientalist representations were welcomed by the 'youth of Asian origin', who aligned themselves with the preferred meaning of the text, largely without question. These same representations were also accepted by the 'white female' youth to some extent however, amongst 'white males' instances of *oppositional readings* arose that can be seen as intrinsically linked to masculinist discourses of nationhood. Secondly, territorialism over 'Asian culture' emerges strongly within the 'youth of Asian origin' in response to representations that highlight fusion practices. This proved to be especially marked amongst the 'women of Asian origin' in areas of 'dress' and 'style'. At the same time, these representations were welcomed by the 'white youth' and especially the 'white women'. These responses need to be contextualized within lived realities that highlight differential subject positionings that come to be primarily constructed by and lived through ideas/practices primarily related to racialized identities. It is to a discussion of these complex experiences that the next part of the thesis consists of in the form of findings from the youth narratives.

PART FIVE
Youth Biographical Findings

What follows across the next three chapters is a discussion of the central and interrelated themes and patterns that emerged from a grounded analysis of biographical interviews I conducted with 20 young British people of 'Asian' and 'white English' origin (as described in detail in Chapter 6). Every attempt has been made to value these individual biographies by including the views of all the interviewees, in the form of individual quotes or more general discussion that reflects common and contradictory views within the sample.

In an attempt to avoid reinforcing crude binary positions, I have chosen to present findings in terms of salient themes and issues that emerged from the biographies as opposed to according to ethnic and/or gender categories thus highlighting commonalities as well as differences. At the same time it must be acknowledged that there are differences of experience and perception that underpin these biographies that have resulted primarily through social divisions of 'race' and racialized positionings. In addition, these experiences have been cross cut with other social divisions based on important processes such as gender, all of which influences the manner of discussing each theme.

Chapter 13: History, 'Race' and Ethnicity

Ethnic Identifications

While the problems in determining 'true' identifications of ethnicity, particularly through direct questioning, has been highlighted earlier in this thesis (see pg 105) the terms of 'self identification' (admittedly arising within the artificial interview context) that emerged through the biographies constitutes a crucial point of differentiation between 'youth of Asian origin' and 'white youth'.

'Asian' and to a lesser extent 'Indian' predominated as forms of identification, which were often used interchangeably within single biographies of the 'youth of Asian origin' and was intrinsically linked to negative experiences of growing up in British society, that was viewed as historically hostile to 'non-whites'. Through experiences of racisms and exclusion, this may be seen as a means of dis-identification with the majority culture, which has been lived as negative and hostile to some/great extent, as shall be illustrated through the various chapters in this part of the thesis. The interchangeable use of terms such as 'Asian' and 'Indian' is significant not just in terms of reflecting a homogenization of identities. What emerges through individual biographies is a blanketing of more specialised identities (for instance, religion or class and in many instances, gender) for a heightened sense of solidarity on the basis of 'race' and ethnicity in the face of racial exclusions. However, 3 exceptions to this emerge within the 10 interviewees of Asian origin. Firstly, *Raveena* who consistently highlights her religious identity as coupled with Asianness by referring to herself as 'Asian Sikh'. However through her narrative this identity positioning appears to be one that has been largely imposed upon the Self through socialization within an overtly religious family and community. As she says:

"...I know what I am and I'm certainly proud to be Sikh (pause) but when it's drummed into you since you were a kid...like getting back from school and then having to go for religious teaching every evening...I can totally

understand my parents reasons and I do value my Asian Sikh heritage but at the same time, I grew up feeling abit resentful..
(Raveena, 30yrs, marketing manager).

It should be noted that these conflicting feelings emerge strongly in Raveena's narration specifically in terms of her religious identity and what was expected of her because of this. The cliché perception of 'cultural confusion' or 'culture clash' amongst second and third generation ethnic minorities did not appear to be something that resonated in this particular narration or the narratives of the 'youths of Asian origin' in general. This substantiates findings of previous studies on ethnic minority youth identities (e.g. Stopes-Roe and Cochrane, 1990, see pg 61). However, it is interesting to note that feelings relating to cultural confusion and ambivalence emerged in some of the narratives of young 'white women'. As I shall discuss later, expressions of 'desire' for experience of 'Other cultures' entwine with a fear of negative perceptions within 'their own culture' and those 'different' cultures (e.g. see pg 270).

Returning to the youth of Asian origin, the remaining two asserted their ethnic identity in terms of presenting themselves as British Asian. The first of these, *Salman*, highlights the British aspect of his identity largely in factual terms and as a means of affirming a legitimate claim in British society. As he says:

"My parents are Asian and they have worked and lived here for years, me and my brother were born here, educated here and work here and so the cycle will continue so from that I'm British and Asian...it's simple really" (Salman, 24yrs, property developer).

When viewed within the context of Salman's biography however, a more complex picture emerges. Here experiences and/or awareness of racisms and exclusion, which he presents as a normalized part of living in Britain, have meant a need to assert his rightful belonging to British society. However, his narration does not seek to emphasise his Asianness with the same urgency, rather it is presented in naturalized terms, perhaps reflecting a part of his identity that is not under question through its

visibility at the level of 'the skin'. At the same time, this is also the site at which his Britishness comes to be questioned. The continuing importance and complexities of 'skin colour' in determining terms of inclusion and exclusion has been highlighted elsewhere in this thesis (see pgs 33-34) and constitutes an important element of the youth narratives, as I shall discuss shortly in this chapter.

Secondly and of particular interest are the views of *Riza*, a 25yr old of Pakistani origin. Through her narration, the highlighting of a British Asian status comes to be intrinsically related to her passion for and profession of fashion designing. This revolves around the politicized promotion of a 'fusion of British and Asian culture'. As she states:

"...there isn't really any confusion for me, I'm born here so have a right to be here and to enjoy a good life here but also my roots and soul are in Asia and I think it's important to bring the two together and be accepted on that basis and I try to express that through my designs ...I've done a bag with a Taj Mahal print against a background of colours of the Union Jack..." (Riza, 25yrs, fashion designer).

Crucially however, Riza sees this personalised professional project as something that she is 'authentically' able to carry out through virtue of being of Asian origin. This belief then results in a negative view of mainstream commodifications of 'Asian culture' which are seen to be lacking in sincerity and crucially, 'authenticity' and are instead motivated purely in terms of economic gain. These constitute important and often complex themes that emerge across the biographies that hold particular relevance for issues of cultural hybridity and representation (which I highlighted in Chapter 1 e.g. pg 49 and shall discuss further in Chapter 14).

In addition what is presented in all the narratives of the youth of Asian origin is no/little 'emotional belonging' to Britain, the country where they were born. Rather, they presented themselves as identifying with their countries of origin (e.g. India or Pakistan) even though they had visited these countries no more than twice in their lives, if at all. However, what

emerges more latently through the narratives is a sense of attachment to London and a sense of fulfilment that comes from living and interacting there (e.g. see pg 268). At the same time this is largely characterised in 'practical' terms of an appreciation of the 'lively city life' and 'cosmopolitan character' as opposed to 'emotional' belonging. Perhaps the need to present complete emotional detachment from Britain can be seen as a security blanket approach towards a 'global Asian community' aided in one way through the increasing global distribution of Asian films and TV networks to the 'Asian diaspora' from 'back home'. This may serve as a comfort mechanism not only to those who have left 'home' long ago and hold out a view to return one day, albeit in mythical terms but also to those young Asians born in Britain who may feel confusion, alienation and exclusion at any given time. This may be linked to points made in Chapter 1 that point to an 'exaggerated Asianness' among the Asian diaspora in terms of a need to feel part of something and important to something, as a result of exclusions in mainstream society.

Regarding the 'white youth', 'British' and to a lesser extent, 'English' constituted the main terms of self-identification and in certain cases were used interchangeably. However, in important contrast to the 'youth of Asian origin', ethnic and/or national identification was not something that emerged as overtly marked in these narratives, rather it was something that for the majority, 'just was' and did not need to be thought about or dissected. This is a point that is also significantly reflected in the narrations of the 'youth of Asian origin' in terms of Britishness, Englishness and whiteness (e.g. see pg 239). It is significant that through the majority of narratives (across ethnicity and gender) and those of the 'white males' in particular, Britishness at some point is also intrinsically linked to Englishness. As *David*, who several times in his narrative refers to his British identity, says:

"I can say I'm British and not have to explain..like not just because I was born in England but all my relatives before me were and are so its real, a fact that can't be disputed in any way..." (David, 25yrs, civil servant).

This view implies that those whose ancestors were not born in England do not have a 'real' claim to Britishness. This in many ways provides a justification for the feelings of 'not really belonging' to Britain that many of the biographies of the youth of Asian origin point to. This also substantiates findings of the Parekh report (2000) that highlights the widespread equation of Britishness with the 'white English'. The historical basis of authentic/inauthentic claims to 'the nation' constitutes an important theme across the youth narratives and shall be discussed further during the course of the chapters in this part of the thesis.

Significantly, more ambivalent feelings linked to the idea of Britishness and/or Englishness registered in the narratives of some of the 'white women', which essentially came from a perception of 'British/English culture' as lacking in comparison to other 'more exotic' cultures. However the crux being that both cultures come to be viewed as tangible fixities defined in stereotypical terms, with perceptions of 'Asian culture' reinforcing orientalist frames of reference. In addition, these narratives while positive towards 'Asian culture' and a multicultural society in general, clearly place 'Asian culture' outside of and different from 'British culture'. This serves to maintain a binary positioning where Othered cultures come to be objectified within a fear/desire paradox, which will be discussed further in the next chapter.

'Race' and Skin Colour

The issue of 'race' constitutes a significant part of the majority of narratives in that it was referred to several times yet crucially this was in terms of a naturality that was not questioned at any level. Rather, terms like 'Asian race' and 'white race' surfaced across the ethnic board as a homogenous, given and tangible 'thing', as the following comments reflect:

"Asian or Black..we are part of the non-white race...."
(Anil, 26yrs, Teacher, self identifies as Asian).

"...at the end of the day, I do belong to the white race and that's a fact I can't change...I shouldn't have to apologise for that"
(Julia, 18yrs, hairdresser, self identifies as English).

This is in direct contrast to widespread acknowledgement of the constructed nature of 'race', as discussed in the opening chapter. The views emerging within the youths here may be seen as a reflection of the normalising power of historically engrained ideologies and practices. Linked to this underlying perception of 'race' emerge three interrelated issues in the narratives of young people and especially amongst the 'youth of Asian origin', which I shall discuss through the course of the chapters in this part of the thesis. These are:

- *The historically based superior positioning of the 'white race' and its contemporary powerful status.*

- *The binary battle of 'us against them' that this engenders (reflected in the earlier interviewee quotes).*

- *The continuing importance of 'race' as an organising principle, yet this does not come without complications (as discussed in Chapter 1).*

The themes of 'race', racisms and skin colour as intersecting factors and practices emerge as dominant themes in 8 out of the 10 biographies of the 'youth of Asian origin'. In the two where these factors are not presented as a central thread, they constitute a significant sub text, where views of self- identity are wrapped up in being 'visibly different' from the majority population. These factors play a significant role in determining feelings of belonging that supersede being born in Britain. Subsequently this becomes intrinsically linked to 'choosing' identifications that distance themselves from Britain and align themselves with their country of origin (as described in the opening discussion of this chapter). As *Rajesh* says:

".... I don't think it makes much difference that I was born in Britain...so what... I'm not white, I'm brown and while it's never been a big issue personally in terms of having encountered racist taunts or anything like that, I know that when it comes to the crunch...I'm a paki, it's that simple so there are always going to be times when you feel like an outsider... not everyone can understand that, like I've got Italian friends that aren't even born here but they can easily blend in simply because they're got white skin, although its olive, it's still white really "
(Rajesh, 19 yrs, student, self identifies as Indian).

Crucially, the issue of skin colour emerges in the biographies of many of the 'white youth' paradoxically through its absence, reflecting the largely unmarked and normalized state of 'whiteness' (discussed earlier on pg 34). However, it emerges as an overt theme in two biographies, both of which, like Rajesh, quoted above, hinge on issues of belonging and acceptance. Firstly, *Charlene's* narrative is constructed around feelings of exclusion within her predominantly black social group. This is linked to her whiteness as preventing her from identifying with the experiences of her black friends, as she says:

"....it's strange because we hang out every day, at work and then in the evenings but there's always the underlying fact that certain things I just can't understand and will never be able to..if someone comes into work saying they were called a nigger on the tube..what right do I have to say anything, at times like that I just wish I could take my skin off!"
(Charlene, 20yrs, bar worker, self identifies as British).

Whiteness in this instance is not placed in a position of superiority or even acceptability, rather it comes to be seen and felt not only as a barrier but as a source of shame that is registered on and through the skin which becomes a source of abjection. At the same time, Charlene automatically places herself within and as part of the dominant majority, through her whiteness. Secondly, through *Anjie's* narrative the issue of her whiteness is presented as both a source of longstanding 'normality' and restrictive insularity. This is subsumed within a narration whose central aspect is her upbringing in Devon which she describes as consisting of lived interactions and experiences "only with white people." This is juxtaposed with moving to London at 18yrs old for university and an ensuing "exposure to different colours" that she presents as evoking

mixed feelings of curiosity, excitement, withdrawal and fear. Her white skin colour and whiteness in general is consistently presented as something tangible upon which 'non-white' skin colours come to be offset and Othered. As she says:

"...it was certainly good for me to move to London but it's difficult to put aside what you've grown up with though and what you are when you meet people who are a different colour and are different from you... (Anjie, 28yrs, IT recruitment officer, self identifies as English).

The discussion so far has concentrated on the binary dynamic between 'white' and 'non white' however various narratives serve to make issues more complex. What emerges are processes of exclusions and discriminations within Asian groups through the hierarchical value attached to different skin colours *within* 'the Asian community'. As *Ayesha* says:

"It really isn't any wonder white people think they are so great when we try and be like them...I used to work in an Asian salon and the number of skin whitening treatments Asian women booked in for was unbelievable but then again, it's always the case that the lighter skinned you are in our culture the more attractive so who can blame them"
(Ayesha, 19 yrs, beauty therapist, self identifies as Asian).

This issue of skin colour of the 'Asian Self' resonates as important in particular for the 'women of Asian origin' in terms of attributing beauty to a fairer skin. In line with observations I have made elsewhere in this thesis, most of these women point to not only Western images of beauty that promote white skin as desirable but also Asian images (e.g. see pg 172). Indian films are highlighted in particular for the equation of light skin with supreme attractiveness, so much so that the 'simulation' of whiteness submerges reality. As *Mia* notes:

"Watching Indian films, it would be easy to think that all the women in India are fair skinned because the heroines have always been almost white..... but how can you explain the majority of heroines that have come from South India, where generally people are dark ... the miracles of film making no doubt" (Mia, 27yrs, teacher, self identifies as Indian).

However, despite the awareness of hegemonic constructions of beauty that emerges through these narratives, it is worth recalling the responses that were given to visual images. The majority of the 'youth of Asian origin' (when shown Image 3) made a positive association between the light skinned Asian model and beauty (see pg 173). However, through the narratives this does not translate to wanting to take on 'whiteness', rather satisfaction in being or desire to be a light skinned Asian is highlighted. In other words while a 'light skin' is desired on the basis of an ideologically influenced aesthetic, 'whiteness' and the privilege of power it may symbolise and exercise is rejected in preservation of an 'Asian identity'. Paradoxically, the very desire for light skin (and by implication the rejection of dark skin) even within the designated parameters of Asianness consolidates the hegemonic position of whiteness. This resonates in terms of a continued reflection of orientalist and colonial ideology and further through perpetuating a notion of white Western beauty as desirable and as means of extracting profit in non-white contexts. This is reflected, for instance, in the high sales of skin whitening products that are aimed at Asian markets in general. Having said this, counters to such hegemonic practices have been put forward, as witnessed in a symbolic discarding of blonde wigs by women at a festival designed to promote national beauty ideals in Tokyo (Grazia magazine-issue 10/25 April 2005).

Racisms and Coping Strategies

As has already been emphasised in this chapter, experiences of racisms form a central theme of the narratives of 'youth of Asian origin'. In contrast, this did not emerge as an issue in terms of the Self in the narratives of 'white youth'. Regarding the former, racisms were identified often in the same narration, at both the individual/overt and institutional levels, as exerts from *Jameel's* narrative illustrate:

"...I suppose, I've got used to being told I'm a Paki..when you've heard that since school, it becomes an everyday thing that you get used to and the more it happens, somehow the less it hurts or shocks...because you're always expecting it.."

"It was always the Asians or Blacks that weren't chosen for the important football matches at school or to represent the debating team at college, nothing was said to make you think you couldn't but it was always there and felt day to day so you just knew you couldn't"

(Jameel, 29yrs, fitness instructor, self identifies as Asian).

Of crucial importance in these narratives are not only instances of personal experience but also the way this is consistently located within a wider context of racisms, in terms of experiences of family and friends as well as a general awareness. This serves to present racisms as a normalised part of living in Britain and in some cases, the West in general. In this context, issues of cultural racism emerge where many of the 'youths of Asian origin' refer to the general devaluing of 'non-white' cultures by and in the West. Here references to parents' experiences of arriving and living in Britain were commonly made as a bridge to their own experiences in order to illustrate the continuing essence of racisms and cultural racism in particular in their contemporary lived context. As *Akshay* recalls:

"I remember what seems like little things about growing up, for instance our 'nice' neighbours commenting on the smell of our food...nothing bad but still making a point to comment every time my mum made something Indian or my friends at school saying my dad spoke abit funny and they couldn't understand him(laughs)which is funny because my dad's taught English for twenty years....then when I was abit older the whole arranged marriages discussion at university...it's like little attacks on your culture isn't it...in a way it's more dangerous than what our parents struggled against because it's not that blatant" (Akshay, 30yrs,accountant,self identifies as Asian).

What emerges through the majority of these narratives is a combined state of resignation to and defence against attacks on Asianness. The former is illustrated through the large number of the 'youth of Asian origin'

who speak in terms of knowledge of and/or experience of racisms amongst non-white people as normal and 'expected' which, as has already been discussed, contributes to their feelings of not belonging in Britain. The latter is reflected through the defensive and protective feelings in relation to 'Asian culture' and 'Asian identity' that come to the fore in these same narratives (e.g. see pg 233) and that can be seen in many of the responses to the visual discourses (as discussed earlier e.g. pg 165). As I shall discuss in the next chapter, 'Asian culture' while difficult to define for many of the 'youths of Asian origin', is presented as the culture they identify with and is consistently protected and often glorified in many of these narratives. It is of interest that this glorification that largely resonates at the aesthetic level shares common ground with a number of the narratives of 'white female' youth with regards to 'Asian culture'. Further, as has already been discussed earlier in this thesis (see pg 152) it is also at this level that processes of cultural commodification most easily take place and is something that shall be elaborated on further in the next chapter (see pgs 252-255).

It is important to note that within an arena of both historical and contemporary racisms and exclusions on a variety of levels that has consistently placed 'white people' in positions of privilege; the 'youth of Asian origin' seem to have developed specific coping strategies. These are conceived largely in terms of a 'white versus non-white' binary where alliances and commonalities are placed within a non-white frame, albeit in certain cases ambivalently. *Shalini's* views are instructive and reflective of feelings that resonate repeatedly in the narratives of the youth of Asian origin, where experiences of racisms are explicitly linked to skin colour therefore assuming solidarity with other visibly 'different' minorities and by the same token, separation from those that are 'white'. As she says:

"..I remember at school, the Asian and black kids not getting attention or encouragement while the white kids got all the favourable treatment...and then you know the kids end up siding with others on that basis....whites with whites and non-whites with non-whites and then within that yeah

you'll get Asians with Asians but still they'll always be some common ground between those who aren't white...like comrades you know" (Shalini, 20yrs, student, self identifies as Indian).

However it is significant that as Shalini's narrative progresses, the 'common ground' that she consistently alludes to appears to constitute an imaginary solace-creating construct as opposed to actuality, in terms of having a wide mix of ethnic minority friends that were and are her 'comrades' against 'the whites'. Instead what can be drawn from her and several other biographies of the 'youth of Asian origin' is a much more ambivalent process where harmonies and hostilities are negotiated on a daily basis. These negotiations take place both within broad categories of 'non-whites' and 'whites', as well as within 'Asians' themselves. As *Anil*, who identifies as Asian, reflects:

"...I grew up with the firm belief that anyone and everyone who had a coloured skin was necessarily going to be on my side... you look around and it's always a black or Asian that doesn't get promotion, it's always a black or Asian that gets the piss taken out of him on TV etc so you feel like you're in the same boat with other blacks and Asians and I'll probably always have that, maybe I need that but when I think back....at school, the black kids joined the white kids in taking the piss out of the 'pakis' and the 'chinks', at uni, alot of Asians pretended they weren't Asian and now the most ironic thing is that I'm engaged to a white girl, who I feel closer to than anyone in my life, she's got a great personality..I just love her but in terms of identity, background and experience we've got nothing in common.....it's difficult to rationalise" (Anil, 26yrs, teacher).

What is particularly interesting in these narratives is not so much whether solidarity actually exists within and across ethnic minority groups but more the desire for it or *natural expectation* of it. This construction emerges as a shield of racial alliances, an imagined community of non-whites forged from a perceived common negative experience of historical and contemporary race relations, as shall become increasingly clear through this discussion.

Significantly, in relation to the narratives of 'white youth', there appears to be no parallel issue of the expectation and/or existence of a solidarity or

alliance amongst 'whites'. This may point to the differential emotional needs and imaginations that arise from differential majority-minority positionings, as well as structural experiences. However, while there may be no overt reference to an alliance between 'whites' in these narratives, what does emerge in effect constitutes alliances and commonalities embedded within fixed and naturalized conceptualizations of 'race', skin colour and nation. These come to be expressed consistently through the themes of 'sameness' and 'difference', as *David* says:

" ..I suppose with me I just gravitate towards things that I feel comfortable with...that keep me in that comfort zone of what's familiar to me and that goes for everything from food to people...so all my social circle are the same as me, same background, same experiences, same culture..."
(David, 25 yrs, civil servant, self identifies as British).

Even in those narratives of the 'white youth' that differ markedly from David, in that they appear to seek out and welcome 'difference' (this features particularly amongst the 'white women') there still emerges a separation of 'white' and 'non white'. Here again, 'whiteness' is consistently linked to that which is 'same as Self' and therefore contrasted with 'non-whiteness' that is presented as 'different from Self' (as shall be illustrated further in the next chapter).

Historical processes

9 out of 10 narratives of the 'youth of Asian origin' highlighted a wider historical context of racism that served to place them as inferior, all of which appeared to shape their attitudes, identities and experiences of being born and brought up in Britain. This placing of individual life experiences and attitudes in relation to historical relations of power is significant because all were born and brought up in a postcolonial British context. However, the impact of colonialism in shaping their identities emerges as a strong factor certainly in terms of expectations and feelings towards how they and 'Asian culture' are perceived in Britain. A number of the youths spoke of a sense of resentment at being born in a country

that had ruled their ancestors and country of origin for such a length of time, which was again placed in a wider context of a history of 'white, Western' power. However through the course of some narrations, more multifaceted feelings come to the fore that reflects ambivalences associated with diasporic experiences in general. For instance, as *Anil* says:

"It's a difficult thing being born in a country that subjugated your parents' country... your roots which makes you question your worth here and I often question my parents' decision to come here (pause) but then I feel guilty because I do have a good life here, a very comfortable life, friends from different cultures but it's difficult to reconcile.."
(Anil, 26yrs, teacher, self identifies as Asian).

In addition, in the case of two narratives of those from Pakistani origin, British rule in India is directly blamed for the partition of the country and creating a 'legacy' of conflict between India and Pakistan, as well as for subsequent Indian and Pakistani diasporic generations. Through such narrations, a homogenous and unified Asianness is presented as being marred by an external power, a view that perhaps in a quest to maintain an 'imagined community' (Anderson,1991) belies the existence of possible internal differences and factions that may have facilitated conquest. This links in with notions of diasporic communities originating from formerly colonized nations identifying with a pure, authentic Self and nation that existed prior to colonization (see Savigliano, 1995). This also serves to gloss over colonisations that may have taken place before European conquest, for instance, Muslim Mogul rule of India.

Crucially and in many ways substantiating the weight placed on historical processes in this thesis overall, the narratives of many of the 'youths of Asian origin' point to a strong link between historical events and contemporary experiences. For instance, from the British imperial project in India (see Chapter 5) to immigration issues and subsequent restrictive Acts in the sixties and seventies (see Chapter 2) to what they feel to be their inferior positioning in contemporary British society. As *Akshay,* through a significant discursive alignment with his country of origin, says:

"...first we are ruled for over a hundred years in our own country and then our parents, with complete legality come to Britain and work hard here but the message has always been clear that there shouldn't be too many of us because we haven't ever been truly wanted...so of course we will always be treated as second rate to some degree so who can blame us if we feel like outsiders here" (Akshay, 30yrs, accountant, self identifies as Asian).

It is important to note that prior to being shown any of the media discourses (discussed in Part Four) 8 out of 10 'youths of Asian origin' highlighted contemporary cultural discourses as continuing to portray Asians and/or 'Asian culture' in an inferior or invisible light. These discourses were identified in terms of those present in their educational experiences but most notably the media, in terms of films, TV and popular images. These views come to be reflected in negative and challenging responses to media images that seek to promote Asianness in an inferior light, where colonialist ideologies were noted and dissected (e.g. see pg 184). However, only one of the narrations places value on the important role of 'Asian media' in contributing to and/or challenging mainstream historical and contemporary portrayals of Asianness. Significantly, it is amongst the narratives of the 'white youth' that Asian cultural representation is seen as 'the most authentic' source of knowledge about 'Asian culture' (as I shall discuss further in the next chapter e.g. pg 247).

Returning to the theme of historical processes, this marks a sharp contrast between the 'youth of Asian origin' and the 'white youth' as in the narratives of the latter, historical relations between Britain and the Indian sub continent is only referred to in one narration, as is discussed shortly. This may be seen as reflective of an acceptance of contemporary multicultural Britain where the overt power differentials of history are viewed as unimportant within a context of cultural hybridity and youth exchanges. However, latent aspects of many of the narratives of 'white youth' point to a tension with cultural and racial difference that is displayed in terms of desire and/or fear. This is coupled with perceptions of 'Asian culture' that can be linked to orientalist and colonial ideologies, as can be seen in the responses to magazine discourses (e.g. see pg

181) and as I shall discuss further in the next chapter. As has been highlighted earlier in this thesis, this serves to challenge notions of a 'third space' necessarily existing within youth spaces that are assumed to be predicated on a displacement of historical practices and ideologies (see pg 41).

The one narrative that refers overtly to historical relations between Britain and India locates this within a general context of the presence of ethnic minority groups in Britain. Here, Britain is presented as a benevolent authority where the colonial period produced universal benefits. As *Sam* says:

"I'll be honest in saying that I have a few Asian and Black friends who I don't always understand when they talk about Britain having a problem of racism... I'm not saying it doesn't exist but there are positive aspects of things too...like these people are in Britain because we went to their countries all those centuries ago and showed them something different, I'm not saying better, but good has come out of it on both sides so I don't think our colonial tradition is something to be necessarily embarrassed about...in a way it brought very different people and cultures together forever"
(Sam, 18yrs, Electrician, self identifies as English).

In this way, a one-dimensional image of colonialism is presented that does not seek to reflect on the pervasive inequalities that this engendered and that have become embedded within various contemporary exercises of power relations.

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Summary

This chapter has highlighted various issues that point to a significant gap between the perceptions and experiences of 'white youth' and 'youth of Asian origin'. For instance, the importance of historical context in relation to 'race' emerges as a primary factor around which many of the narratives of 'youth of Asian origin' are constructed.

This is seen as having a significant impact on contemporary experiences of racisms and exclusion within British society. In contrast, colonial histories do not appear in the vast majority of narratives of the 'white youth' and crucially issues of 'race' appear largely unmarked. In other words, while there is little overt reference to 'race' in these narratives, it does emerge with reference to 'whiteness' as reflecting a normalized and historically dominant positioning. Here, whiteness implicitly emerges as that which is the 'same as' Self and non-whiteness as that which is 'different from' the Self. The issue of skin colour in terms of 'visible difference' and the normality attributed to 'white skin' emerges strongly in the majority of youth narratives although there are instances of ambivalence that offer some challenge to the hegemony and homogeneity of whiteness. However, there also emerges a correlation of Britishness/Englishness with whiteness within many of the youth narratives (across gender and ethnicity) which substantiates findings from the Parekh Report (2000) on multicultural Britain.

The factors that have been highlighted here can be seen to contribute to the disengagement of the majority of 'youth of Asian origin' from Britishness through emphasis on their Indian/Asian identity. It is experiences of racisms that have engendered coping strategies which translate to the expectation of solidarity between 'non whites' and more specifically within 'Asian communities'. However, it is clear that lived realities illustrate ambivalences and contradictions, with relations also being developed on a negotiated and non essentialist basis. I have also highlighted how experiences of racism amongst the 'youth of Asian origin' translates into a territorial protectiveness over 'Asian culture' within a context of appropriation by 'the mainstream'. It is to a discussion of these issues that the next chapter focuses on.

Chapter 14: Cultural Terrains

Cultural Ownership

As discussed in the previous chapter, it is the awareness and knowledge of imperial projects and the ensuing emphasis on differential status for 'black' and 'white' coupled with the structural effects of Empire, for instance, in terms of its role in the formation of diasporic communities, that forms a central aspect of the narratives of the majority of 'youth of Asian origin'. It is within this context that views of identity positionings and culture come to be placed and this serves to problematise the harmonious or even 'minority empowerment' assumptions underlying popular notions of cultural hybridity (as has been discussed in Chapter 1). It is significant that 'Asian culture' for many of these youths is something that is owned by them by virtue of their 'Asianness'. Therefore 'Asian culture' comes to represent a shield that is clung to and is perceived as under threat through hybrid fusions, often translated as 'taking over' which is seen to result in a dilution of 'Asian identity'. To illustrate this point, what follows below are some exerts from *Shalini's* narrative, the essence of which resonates in the majority of narratives of the 'youth of Asian origin'. Here she talks about her love for 'proper Indian music' that she finds 'Bombay Bar'[4] (where point of contact was made and discussion of which her narration begins with) is geared towards providing. As she says:

"You get real Indian music here, like Bhangra and Indian film music that's not been mixed in with a hip hop beat or that kind of stuff-it's like proper..you know, pure, like it's not been sampled over or mixed in with something Western... you look around and see other Asians and it's comforting... it makes me feel good-really comfortable"

Shalini identifies her 'comfortable' space in terms of being surrounded by various 'Indian' elements, be that in terms of people, food and most

[4] As mentioned in Chapter 6, for ethical reasons real names of clubs are not given and Pseudonyms have been used.

significantly music, which importantly is seen to be 'pure' and authentic if it hasn't been fused with Western elements. However, there is no reflection on the broader Western context of space in which 'Bombay Bar' itself is placed. Shalini goes on to highlight what she identifies as inauthentic and therefore spaces where she feels less comfortable:

".....I used to go to other places that were really popular with lots of different types of people and really trendy.....but it was all about mixing Indian with Western which is fine, it sounds great, but it's like there is a dilution going on.....like the Indianness is somehow diluted and by mixing Indian music with Western, it's suddenly trendy and you get white girls doing these weird hand movements (laughs) trying to be Madonna (demonstrates)... and I suppose I don't think they should be there...they don't really understand our culture....it's like muscling in you know...."

This provides interesting discussion on various levels: firstly, in terms of demonstrating the highly symbolic and important role played by elements of popular culture (e.g. music) with regards to notions of identity and feelings of inclusion/exclusion that challenges its perception as simply 'light entertainment'. Secondly and crucially is Shalini's emphasis on an 'authentic Indianness' and the implicit fixity, homogeneity and autonomy from mainstream influence (which is presented in aggressive and intruding terms: 'muscling in') that she wants to preserve. In many of the narratives of the 'youth of Asian origin', 'Asian culture' becomes 'some thing' to be protected in a battle that is essentially presented as pitted between 'black' and 'white'. This again reflects a solace creating alliance between non-whites (discussed in the previous chapter) within a historical dynamic of antagonistic power relations that continues to be felt in contemporary society. As Shalini elaborates:

"Lets be honest..... white people throughout history have a habit of getting in on something and then taking it over and they've done it around the world, ruled countries and people and determined the lives of future generations forever....and now with all this Asian is trendy stuff, it's the same thing really...they are producing this stuff that isn't really theirs, you know what I mean whereas black people are like us, they've had stuff taken from them on every level.....historically, through slavery and then on another level...like hip hop music and style where you see white guys

trying to be black, it's pathetic and that's what I mean because it's a similar thing being done to Asians now with the music and style...the main thing is it's not done in a respectful way, it's like taking over....I just don't think it's fair." (Shalini, 20yrs, student, self identifies as Indian).

It is significant that these feelings are particularly marked within the 'women of Asian origin' who consistently pointed to cultural artefacts such as the sari, bindi, mehndi and jewellery being "hijacked" (a term used by 3 out of the 5 women of Asian origin) by mainstream popular culture. This is perhaps unsurprising given that these are elements conventionally associated with women's adornment which in itself (across ethnic borders) is given more credence than men's. However, there are increasingly positive connotations attached to 'male grooming' through celebrity endorsements etc promoting the 'Metro sexual male' (see introductory discussion). Nevertheless, it is these very elements of female adornment (e.g. mehndi) that have received most attention through fashion catwalks and women's fashion magazines. It is in this light that suspicious and hostile views from the majority of the 'youth of Asian origin' (especially the women) towards many of the magazine discourses (e.g. see pg 190) that highlighted a fusion of Asian cultural elements need to be viewed.

On the other hand, the largely positive responses to these same discourses from many of the 'white youth' (especially the women) gains further meaning when viewed with regards to narratives that seek to embrace cultural fusions. Here, the same cultural artefacts that the 'women of Asian origin' pointed out as being open to mainstream "hijacking" such as the bindi were clearly expressed as sources of aesthetic 'desire' for many of the 'white female youth', as *Julia* says:

"...I love all the ethnic jewellery and the bright colours...I've had a few henna tattoos done, they're great because they are temporary so I've tried lots of different designs.. it's all so pretty"
(Julia, 18yrs, hairdresser, self identifies as British).

Two significant and interrelated points emerge through these narratives, the first of which highlights the strategic and orientalist terms of embracing cultural fusion on the part of the 'white women' in the sample. All of them presented their 'desire' for 'Asian culture' and in certain instances, ethnic minority cultures in general, in orientalist terms of 'exoticness' and 'difference' from 'their own'. Therefore while overtly embracing fusion, in thought and practice, a binary separation is being maintained. Further, the very notion of 'fusion' in these instances seems to exist on a selective level by the 'white youth' in general, where minority cultural elements become objectified and rendered available to pick out, 'experiment with' (for example, as in different henna tattoos, as above) and incorporate into a hegemonic lifestyle. Crucially in this light, *people,* from 'different cultures' come to be stripped of their 'humanness' and are perceived almost entirely in terms of an objectified 'difference'. This is something that has been highlighted at various points in this thesis (e.g. see pg 158) and is something that will be discussed further in this chapter.

What is particularly significant within this discussion is that Othering processes are carried out not in terms of some distant, unknown 'difference' but rather in a context where there is regular interaction with 'Asian people' with which commonalities are shared, for instance, youth experiences such as university life. Here then, 'British Asians' can be seen as constituting 'familiar strangers' (as discussed earlier on pg 47) however their racialized difference ensures their occupancy of sites of 'the strange' that consistently overshadows sites of 'the familiar'. Secondly and relatedly, the very process of cultural fusion being undertaken maintains the white hegemonic Self at the centre where Othered cultures and peoples seem to exist to enhance that Self. I turn to an excerpt from *Kathleen's* narrative as illustration of the above points, who at the time of meeting was working behind the bar of 'The Art Venue' (on an Asian club night). As she says:

"Oh Saturdays are the best night, the night you came down.. it's something different from all the chart crap...something that really sounds like music, I really love all the Indian stuff and envy my Indian friends for their beautiful music, lovely clothes and make-up, gorgeous jewellery....it's all really arty and creative, like from another world... so it's good to have somewhere that you can be a part of it all, even just for a night...." (Kathleen, 24yrs, masters student, self identifies as British).

What Kathleen has to stay is instructive in echoing the orientalist fantasy as underpinning her narrative is the desire to have knowledge about and be part of "all the Indian stuff". This itself is an objectifying homogenisation that concentrates on the aesthetic alone which although presented positively in terms of adjectives such as 'beautiful' ; 'lovely' relegates 'Indian/Asian culture' to the level of objectified difference (i.e. from "another world") like a special exhibit that can be taken in at will. While 'Asian culture' and 'different people' form an integral part of Kathleen's narrative, throughout they are placed in terms of these easily commodifiable aesthetics alone and how this impacts on her. There is no reflection on the lived experiences of 'her Asian friends' or historical power relations that may have constituted these realities, the importance of which can certainly be seen in the narratives of the youth of Asian origin (see pg 228). Rather, 'Asian culture' and Otherness in general is constructed as something that exists for and in terms of her Self-identity.

Two further points need to be made here. Firstly, there is some difference between the 'white men and women' of the sample in relation to attitudes towards cultural fusion. While the women tended to embrace fusion, albeit on the strategic levels discussed above, the men's embracement of cultural fusions is (in 3 out of 5 cases) presented in terms that advocated their 'right' to know about and take part in ethnic minority cultures, including 'Asian culture'. What underpins this is their own 'legitimate' connection to Britain through origin, and by implication, the illegitimate position of ethnic minorities in Britain. As *Sam* says:

"I don't see anything wrong with eating Indian or Chinese food, or listening to Eastern inspired music...after all, and I don't mean this badly, I was born here, my great grandfather was born here ...we're the ones that have always been here and other cultures have more recently come in and have contributed greatly to what Britain is today, but I don't think that means we have to explain or justify our use of them.."
(Sam, 18yrs, electrician, self identifies as English).

Here again, the equality of process and exchange implied in the term 'fusion' comes to be challenged by views that in effect clearly maintain a dynamic of separation that relegates ethnic minority cultures to the fringes, where 'desirable' elements can be extracted at will by the majority on the grounds of 'authentic' vis a vis 'inauthentic' national belonging. In this context 'culture' and indeed 'multiculturalism' come to represent less a means for 'fusing' people and places together and more a boundary marker for inclusion and exclusion into the nation.

Secondly, and ironically, the reduction and rendering of 'Asian culture' to aesthetic and essentially unchallenging elements that has been highlighted in earlier discussions in this thesis (e.g. see pg 152) and the narratives of the 'white youth' is largely replicated in the narratives of the 'youth of Asian origin'. This reflects both the ambiguity associated with the notion of 'culture' (discussed on pgs 37-39) as well as the normalized influence of hegemonic constructions of culture and identity. It is to a discussion of these themes that I now turn.

Cultural Ambiguities

The core issues relating to 'culture' around which this thesis revolves raise a number of important points that strike at the very basis of what culture really means, as can be seen through the narrations of the young people I spoke to. Firstly as a general point, while the importance of 'culture' is consistently highlighted by youths across ethnic and gender divisions but in particular by 'youths of Asian origin', attempts to define *what culture actually is* proved universally difficult. What does emerge

strongly is that views on what culture is, largely come to be placed in the arena of popular culture exclusively, with films, music and food commonly being cited as constituting culture. This is an interesting reflection of the dominance of popular culture in contemporary urban Britain and therefore its importance in identity constructions and representations.

Secondly, *how culture is used* gives rise to a number of issues. As has previously been described 'Asian culture' is consistently drawn upon by the majority of 'youths of Asian origin' as a defensive shield against experience of racisms and emerges through the narratives as a fixed and tangible thing that is presented as a 'natural' and undisputable part of 'being Asian'. As *Ayesha* says:

"...it's not something that I give much thought to really...I'm Asian and my culture is Asian, it's who I am and its important to have that sense of awareness when you are in the minority"
(Ayesha, 19yrs, beauty therapist, self identifies as Asian).

While 'Asian culture' comes to be defined as Asian identity and subsequently Asian identity comes to occupy the Asian body by virtue of its marginality, it is interesting that self-definitions of 'Asian culture' by the 'youth of Asian origin' remain on the popular aesthetic level, as *Mia* says:

"...Asian culture...like the music, food, clothes, bollywood..umm family, festivals...not that I know everything about them, like the exact purpose of each function, but it's part of my culture, something that I was born into....so its mine...." (Mia, 27yrs, teacher, self identifies as Indian).

It is important to stress that the easily commodifiable aspects of 'Asian culture' echo both 'mainstream' and to a lesser extent, 'British Asian' media representations and the narratives of the 'white youth', which also serve to present 'Asian culture' in fixed, tangible terms. Crucially this is compared and contrasted with 'white culture', which brings me to my third point. Legitimate recourse to this tangible fixity called 'Asian culture' is only deemed possible through 'authentic' means (i.e. birth). The fact that not everything about 'Asian culture' is known becomes unimportant or is

presented as unimportant, due to being 'born into Asian culture'. This implies that because 'white people' are not, their interest in 'Asian culture' is illegitimate and boundaries of separation are enforced. This illustrates a significant point as while the majority of the 'youth of Asian origin' in speaking of 'Asian culture' place little/no emphasis in their narratives on cultural aspects such as cultural/religious festivals, language and tradition, these same elements are presented as paramount when seeking to glorify 'Asian culture' in comparison with 'white culture'. On this basis, through many of the narrations of the 'youth of Asian origin', what may be seen as orientalist conceptions of what constitutes 'Asian culture' are offered as a means of elevating 'Asian / Eastern culture' in comparison to 'white Western culture'. For instance, the 'spirituality' of Asian and Eastern culture in general is utilized only in order to compare more favourably than Western culture. On this point it is worth recalling the vehement challenges by the 'youth of Asian origin' to images and textual discourses that sought to represent Asia and/or the East in terms of spirituality etc (e.g. see pg 180). However, similar images are used by the 'youth of Asian origin' as a means of emphasising difference and binary positionings. However, it is my view that to label this practice in terms of self-orientalism (see pg 78) restricts the agency of the individual as well as neglects feelings emerging from minority positionings (as I shall elaborate on in the concluding discussion e.g. pg 289).

This issue is compounded by the views of the majority of 'white youth' who I interviewed. Here, the 'white women' in particular seem to mirror the 'compare and contrast' approach cited above. Thus 'Asian culture' conceptualized in its 'spiritual' and 'exotic' manifestation is presented as more meaningful and fascinating than 'English culture', which is also presented as interchangeable with 'British culture'. As *Kathleen* states:

".....as I've got older, it's become glaringly obvious that my own culture has no intriguing aspects to it, it's just there... so you have to look elsewhere for some substance...English culture to me just means pubs, stiff upper lip, rambling in the country...all the fascinating stuff..not! (laughs) I like the vibrancy, openness, bright colours, creativeness... that

you find in Italian, Greek or Indian cultures which makes people from those cultures very different, they're warm and open....British culture is dull...there's nothing there!"
(Kathleen, 24yrs, masters student, self identifies as British).

Kathleen's views here are interesting on various levels, firstly: through her overt praise of Other cultures, what emerges is the normalised as well as stereotypical presentation of British/English culture, coupled with its restricted membership. Through discourse such as "no intriguing aspects" and "dull" as a means of description, British/English culture retains a degree of ordinariness that in comparison to the "bright colours" and "vibrancy" of Other cultures, attributes it with a sense of invisibility that paradoxically ensures its hegemony. As a result, 'real culture' is ascribed to the marked and homogenized Other, ensuring its sustained visibility and difference from 'the norm'. Regarding this point, it is important to note that many of the 'youths of Asian origin' while spending considerable time talking about 'Asian culture' in their narratives, hardly mentioned 'English culture' unless (as has already been highlighted) to use it as a point of contrast. Where 'Asian culture' proves difficult to define and ultimately is presented almost exclusively in terms of its 'popular' facets, descriptions of 'English culture' are often presented in banal and stereotypical terms.

It is significant that for the 'youth of Asian origin', 'English culture' is constructed as something that, from being born and brought up in Britain is fully 'known' to them, is 'just there' but not marked in any particular way, echoing the views of many of the 'white women', as indicated above through Kathleen's comments. For instance, to quote *Rajesh*:

"...I mean obviously it exists, but what it is I don't know...if you were to ask me what English culture is, then I wouldn't be able to tell you but of course it's there, it's everywhere...and even though I can't define it, there are definite feelings of not belonging to it sometimes..."
(Rajesh, 19yrs, student, identifies as Indian).

Once again, what emerges is the normalisation of the 'majority culture' through its invisible, taken for granted status and therefore by implication the marked nature of ethnic minority cultures, some more than others. It is important to remember the hostility towards newly arrived Asian immigrants in the sixties that sought to highlight differences centred on their 'smelly food', 'strange clothes' and 'funny language', something that was not directed, in the same way, towards West Indian immigrants (see Patterson, 1963). In this light, the contemporary process of rendering such 'strangeness' into global commodities becomes a means of not only controlling difference but diffusing its threat to crucially and paradoxically, make it more normal.

Recalling the earlier excerpt from Kathleen's narrative (pg 239) a second, related issue that emerges is the linking of English with British culture on the one hand and simultaneously its difference with Other cultures. What is interesting here is that through this discursive process, the 'Greek, Italian and Indian' cultures that she mentions are divorced from Britishness that inturn comes to be represented by Englishness. Further, Kathleen's views also indicate a fragmentation of 'whiteness' that is also present in 3 other narratives of the 'white youth' that seek to challenge the perception and portrayal of a homogenous 'white entity' emanating from many of the narrations of the 'youth of Asian origin'. Here, Kathleen places Greek, Italian and Indian cultures and inturn the people that 'belong' to these cultures on the same level that represent attributes she deems desirable (e.g. 'openness') and which British/English culture and people are presented as not possessing. In this context Othered cultures are 'desired' for 'the lack' they are seen to compensate for in the hegemonic culture of the Self. However, within this construction, Britishness/Englishness retains its central and normalized position but this time over other white, European cultures that come to be exoticised, marked with difference and Othered, albeit in benevolent terms. What is also of interest and something that I shall elaborate on later in this chapter, is that Kathleen's 'knowledge' of these Other cultures and people, (especially that of Greek and Italian) come less from personal

interaction and more from popular perceptions and images gleaned from an all pervasive media culture.

Regarding the remaining 3 narratives that serve to deconstruct the notion of a homogenised white culture, it is worth mentioning *David's* views that seek to promote the superiority of Britain, which is again implicitly equated with Englishness, within and above other European countries. This comes to be interestingly enveloped within increasingly passionate comments on sport that emerge through his narrative when talking about his leisure time:

" ... I'm happiest relaxing in front of the television, football and cricket, that's my thing....I used to play football regularly with a club but after awhile it just got annoying because it would always be the Italians or Swedish that got to play in all the matches and got all the praise (pause)and none of us British guys did.. it's ridiculous really because it's the Italians that have come over to our leagues to play.. and we just scramble after foreign coaches as if Britain can't stand on her own...of course we can and we always have ...in everything." (David, 25yrs, civil servant, self identifies as British).

David's latter comment is something that resonates with some of the 'white male youth' and provides a point of contrast with the 'white women', in terms of portrayals of 'British/English culture' that goes beyond limited and stereotypical descriptions of 'English culture' as a 'pub culture' etc towards a much more nationalistic and masculinist representation. In these cases, 'English culture' comes to be defined mainly in political terms through emphasis on Britain's successful position in the world throughout history which after some probing is clarified as reference to imperial domination as well as contemporary influence. However, as highlighted in the previous chapter, reference to historical context in this case is not deliberated on in terms of relational dynamics between peoples and contemporary racialized positionings.

In addition, although not presented as linked to the above, some of the men as well as the women spoke of Britain's cultural influence in the world, largely in terms of language and education, from which for

instance, 'true' culture defined as arts and music was seen to emanate. This was presented as an important contrast to the monopoly of 'American culture' that, while clearly utilized and enjoyed, was seen to be commercial and soulless. Although this highlights degrees of separation within whiteness, both are implicitly acknowledged as occupying positions of dominance through their ability to 'give to the rest'. As *Carla* succinctly puts it:

"They gave Friends (reference is to popular sitcom) we gave Shakespeare" (Carla, 30yrs, lawyer, self identifies as British).

As can be seen from the above discussion, the views that emerge (across gender and ethnic divisions) in relation to issues of culture pivot around notions and degrees of what is seen as 'the same' in relation to Self and 'being different' from Self. This has considerable influence on feelings and attitudes towards culture of the Self and culture of Others. However, as has already been indicated, this is seen to have comparatively less influence on lived practices which highlights the ambiguity associated with conceptualizations of culture. As illustration, I offer an excerpt from *Raveena's* narrative that clearly seeks to construct herself as separate from the homogenised white majority, as she says:

"...well like what do I have in common with a Sarah or a Jenny and likewise...I mean they can come along to listen to Talvin Singh for a few hours...put a sari on and get in on abit of ethnic for the night and then the next thing they'll be back to their white reality.....you know what I mean though...they're trying to be cool by coming into our culture"
(Raveena, 30yrs, marketing manager, self identifies as Asian Sikh).

Through Raveena's narration, Asian cultural identity emerges as something she constructs as being separate and shielded from the white majority through the consistent usage of terms such as: 'our culture' 'my culture' being juxtaposed against 'they' 'them' etc. However, the facts and nuances of her biography, along with other interviewees (as has been mentioned earlier) highlight specific associations and intimacies that transcend the constructed boundaries of 'race' and culture. These burgeoning subject positions and relations however come to be

challenged by micro processes such as family and community expectations (which the next chapter shall illustrate) and macro forces that produce hegemonic knowledge, as I discuss below.

Knowledge and Representation

In 7 out of 10 narratives of the 'white youth', the importance of 'getting to know about other cultures' is highlighted, although significantly the motivations for this vary according to gender. In the main, with regards to the men, there appears to be a 'need' to gather as much 'knowledge' as possible that is linked to a fear or suspicion of 'difference' that impacts on the Self in varying ways. For instance, with reference to *Sam*, what emerges through his narration is a sense of personal inadequacy at leaving school without any academic qualifications. These feelings of frustration are concentrated almost exclusively upon racial difference, at the expense of the Self's responsibility, that can be linked to his Asian school friends who have gone onto further education. As he says:

"...it just wasn't for me really, I wanted to get out there and have cash in my pocket straight away..which I've got, but not that much certainly not as much as some of my mates will be getting soon, most of them are at university now so in a few years they'll come out with really good jobs and I'll be left way behind....funny thing is that they're not even really from here (pause) you see that a lot.....like Asians living in nice houses with nice cars and lots of English people with not that much...sometimes I do think about the unfairness of it all"
(Sam, 18yrs, electrician, self identifies as English).

It is significant that through Sam's narrative his perception of 'difference' is also intrinsically linked to popular media constructions that centre around what was often described as 'common knowledge' or 'things that everyone knows'. This is something that arose in a number of the narratives of 'white youth', for example:

"..before I even knew any Asians or black people or been to these places, I'd heard that Brixton was dangerous and that Brick Lane was full of Asian restaurants ....all that basically came from reports on the news" (Julia, 18yrs, hairdresser, self identifies as British).

Regarding the majority of 'white women', their motivations for wanting to know more about other cultures appears to revolve around a 'desire' and fascination of difference that, as has been emphasised earlier is particularly concentrated on the aesthetic elements of 'Asian culture', for instance, beauty and fashion. 'Asian culture' and in some instances Othered European cultures such as Italian, comes to be presented and experienced as a colourful contrast to 'British' and/or 'English culture'. The significant point is that while 'knowledge' of what is seen to constitute these cultures may in some cases come from personal interactions with, for instance, 'Asian friends', this is superseded by popular media conceptions. Therefore, for instance, solely 'mainstream' magazines are used as source material for knowing about 'Asian fashion' or more significantly, 'how to adapt Asian fashion'. This serves to substantiate the largely positive responses by the 'white female' youth to the mainstream discourses of style that has been discussed in Part Four (e.g. see pg 189). As *Charlene* says:

" I love all the ethnic styles, all the fabrics and colours and while I do ask my Asian friends I'd rather look to wear these things in an adapted and trendy way so I do rely on fashion mags like Elle to keep me up to date" (Charlene, 20yrs, bar worker, self identifies as British).

It is important to note that on the whole, what is cited as 'common knowledge' about people and cultures is largely gleaned from media representations, be that through films, books, magazines and television programmes. For instance, with reference to Kathleen's earlier comment from this chapter (pg 239) that decisively lists the cultural traits of Italians, in terms of warmth and openness etc, it emerges through her narration that this image does not come through personal interaction. Rather, this comes exclusively from the 'American Italian' gangster films she has seen

(e.g. 'the Godfather') that amidst an arena of violence highlight intense family relations and rituals revolving around food, love and music. What is highlighted through these examples is the overwhelming impact of various media mediums in imparting constructions and representations of peoples and cultures with a durable 'truth' that maintains hegemony.

Regarding the narratives of all of the 'youth of Asian origin', in contrast to what has been discussed above, there is no expression in terms of 'need' and/or 'desire' to know about what is interchangeably referred to as 'white culture/English culture'. As indicated earlier, this is explained in terms of having been born and brought up in England (which is interchangeably used with 'the West') and their lived experiences as a minority culture subsumed within a dominant one. What emerges through these narratives is knowledge about 'English people and culture' that comes from personal interactions but primarily through an awareness of historical processes and experiences of racisms (discussed in Chapter 13) that largely serve to engulf subjective experience. As *Riza* says:

"..I'm born here and I've gone through all my life experiences here, like school, college, work so obviously I've got English friends too who I'm close with but in all honesty, what our parents have been subjected to in their home country and then what you deal with here has a lasting influence on your feelings"
(Riza,25yrs,fashion designer, self identifies as British Asian).

It is significant that much less influential in the narrations of the youth of Asian origin appear to be impressions of 'English culture' gathered directly from the media, that in many instances can be linked to a contextual majority-minority dynamic that reflects the invisibility of 'whiteness'. As *Rajesh* says with reference to BBC soap opera, EastEnders:

"I think something like EastEnders is a good example of what I mean..almost every character is a stereotype but the problem is that while the mainly English characters everyone will look at and see that they are exaggerated when they have an Asian or Black character, I think its more likely to the white people watching that this is what an Asian

person is like....because they don't know enough truth about Asian people so it's just easier to believe what you are shown" (Rajesh, 19yrs, student, self identifies as Asian).

This is an interesting point that ties in levels of familiarity with levels of knowledge where minority cultures and people are perceived to be constructed and viewed primarily through hegemonic representational systems that are not seen as providing an authentic portrayal. Of course this relational dynamic can work on a variety of levels, for instance, to take the 'EastEnders' example, if this show is broadcast in a country where people do not have daily, personal interactions with 'English people', then this will have a significant impact on how the English characters and Englishness are received. However, it is important to emphasise that with reference to the 'white youth' interviewed for this study, all of them have had some interaction with 'Asian culture' and 'people of Asian origin' to a greater or lesser extent. However, it is clear from their narratives and the responses to visual discourses that media constructed images of Asianness are viewed in largely bona fide terms (e.g. see pg 164).

Moving on, it is important to note that in 8 out of 10 narratives of the 'youth of Asian origin' the contemporary proliferation of 'Asian culture' is not seen as having any bearing on altering their racialised positions in British society. As *Salman* says:

"I don't think that anyone can really believe that because white wisdom says Asian is the in thing, it means that we're going to be treated differently all of a sudden, equally....it's just media hype"
(Salman, 24yrs, property developer, self identifies as British Asian).

From this viewpoint, the area of self-representation for the youths of Asian origin significantly did not emerge as a satisfactory alternative or challenge to mainstream representations of 'Asian culture' or Asianness. In a number of the Asian narratives, responsibilities are attributed to those Asians working in the media arena (e.g. film directors) in not

necessarily portraying 'Asian identity' in blindly positive terms, but in moving away from exploiting common stereotypes of 'Asian culture', as defined by the West. For instance, 'the oppressive Asian family' and 'arranged marriages' that constitute central themes of popular British Asian films (e.g. East is East and Bend it like Beckham, as highlighted on pgs 5 ;156). These representations are not seen as an accurate portrayal of their lived realities and therefore, there appears to be little difference perceived between 'mainstream' and 'minority' portrayals, as *Jameel* highlights:

"...after all what Asian culture are white people seeing, the interpretation of Bollywood as seen by Andrew Lloyd Weber like he's some big authority on it and supposedly from our side on TV you've got the Goodness Gracious Me lot, who have become so successful simply because they're making fun of us and then all these Asian films that do so well because they confirm every Asian stereotype going.....the only redeeming thing is that Asians are talking about Asians I suppose but then at the same time, they are making us all look stupid...so how's that supposed to make things better for us" (Jameel, 28, fitness instructor, self identifies as Asian).

In comparison, from many of the narratives of 'white youth', it is these 'Asian produced' texts that are seen as an important and authentic source of information for learning about 'Asian culture'. *Andrew's* narrative is particularly instructive in this regard where he talks about the importance of works by 'Asian artists' themselves in transmitting an authentic 'Asian culture'. As he says:

"I think films like Bend it like Beckham are good because they aren't only funny but they can give you an insight into what cultures are really like..and it must be true because an Asian has made it....and I can certainly identify things in it that I've picked up on when I go round to my Asian friends houses and they do have different family setups....of course things get exaggerated but they must have some basis in reality..." (Andrew, 28yrs, publishing exec, self identifies as British).

It is interesting to note that while the film in question also portrays a 'white family' in exaggerated and dysfunctional terms, Andrew's narrative (nor the narratives of the 'youth of Asian origin' who referred to this film)

makes no reference to this. This again emphasises the invisibility attributed to 'white identity' and representations that does not require attention therefore reinforcing its normality and centrality.

What is significant about this issue of self-representation is that the media products that are highlighted as being 'Asian produced' (across ethnic divisions of the youth interviewed) concentrate on those that have been co-opted into the mainstream, so to what extent these can really stand as self-representations is questionable. What comes to represent 'Asian culture' and 'Asian people' on the level of self representativeness is really concentrated in the hands of a select elite of Asians, such as Meera Sayal *(Goodness Gracious Me; The Kumars at No.42;Life isn't all ha ha hee hee)* who through their works appear to be negotiating issues of 'race', culture, marginality and community. The paradox that emerges is that the very fact (to take the example of Sayal again) she is a familiar name, or at least face in mainstream popular culture limits the radical nature of any projects that reach a mainstream audience, for the fact that they are produced within a hegemonic system ultimately for a mainstream audience. The common thread that can be seen in all of the afore mentioned works by Sayal, while containing subversive elements (e.g. the 'Going for an English' parody of the Indian restaurant in Goodness Gracious Me) consists of in effect substantiating age old stereotypes of 'Asian culture' , as Jameel highlights above, for instance 'the protective and restrictive Asian family.' Further, having finally established a foothold and successful 'formula' within a conventionally closed hegemonic media arena, it is difficult to envisage British Asian projects on this basis serving to counter stereotypical images in the future for perhaps fear of 'rocking the boat'. In this light, the complexities involved within notions of self-representation and authenticity come to the fore that highlight difficulties entwined with basic questions regarding: *who is representing the community?* (see pg 37 for an earlier discussion). Further, more complex questions are raised in terms of: *is the visibility of Asians in the mainstream enough as a means of empowerment/challenge to hegemonic portrayals and/or at what cost?*

A related point is that partly because of the perceived failure of Asians, amongst the 'youth of Asian origin', in representing themselves satisfactorily in the public and especially media arena, importance is placed on how they are represented by and in the mainstream. This links in with feelings of marginality and the formation of identities historically forged in opposition. As *Akshay*, whose narrative revolves around feelings of defence linked to his racial-cultural identity, says:

"...it shouldn't matter what they think of you, but it does.....you've got your own culture and you're proud of it but the bottom line is that you're living in a society where you aren't in the majority...no matter how much you've tried to fit in... you look different from them...and you're being judged constantly because of that and you always have been...so of course it matters how you and your people get seen by the majority....which is really largely negative... because that's where the power is and you are always aware of that and always trying to defend your culture against that"
(Akshay, 30, self employed accountant, self identifies as Asian).

It is important to note that the above discussion constitutes a significant counter to views expressed by the 'British Asian' magazine staff that I spoke to, who point to the existence of self-representation as key. For example, as one features writer says:

"I think the most important thing is that a magazine produced by Asians is catering for the Asian community and that's crucial because it means that we are making ourselves visible on our terms..."

The overriding point that emerges from these media producers is that representation by Asians, for Asians in itself is the primary concern. However, through the narratives of the 'youth of Asian origin', the importance of representation centres around the *type* of representation being offered, therefore going beyond achieving 'visibility' or crucially Asian equivalents of a 'white world'. As *Mia* says:

"..it's good having the Asian networks, music channels and magazines...I do read them and it's important we have them, something that reflects our lives as Indians living in Britain but I do wish they weren't so much copies of magazines like Vogue or Marie Claire, but just with Asian faces and a few Indian words sprinkled in...you know, what's the point, I'd rather read those then... where's the originality but I guess it's difficult in practice..." (Mia, 27yrs, teacher, self identifies as Indian).

This point reflects on going debates that centre around the limitations of merely substituting negative images for positive or achieving successful minority representation through in effect erasing 'Blackness'. A case in point is the successful eighties American comedy, *The Cosby Show,* that was black produced and consisted of black characters that challenged familiar negative images of black people, in particular 'the dysfunctional family'. This was achieved through portraying an economically successful and harmonious family however; the portrayal belied a middle class bias that in effect promoted the message that black people can be successful through education and self reliance. Issues of racism and institutional barriers to success that the majority of black people in America face therefore became insignificant (Jhally and Lewis, 1992).

Commodifying Culture

It is within the contextual discussions that have been offered so far that views on the popularity and representational forms of 'Asian culture' in the West come to be embedded. It is therefore unsurprising that the majority of the 'youth of Asian origin' remained sceptical of both the motivations behind this and its impacting value. As *Akshay,* who consistently refers to himself as Asian throughout his narration, told me:

"...we can't be expected to just forget things....I can't and won't forget my mum coming to pick me up from school and the next day in front of the whole class, some kid saying: 'why does your mum wear funny clothes and a dot on her head?' and now all of a sudden these very things are seen as really trendy and we should feel happy about it...I don't think so, its just making money, not to mention fools out of us isn't it?" (Akshay, 30, self employed accountant).

Akshay's biography is representative in many ways of the majority of the 'youth of Asian origin' because there emerges the clear sense of having been consistently placed in a position of defence against an attack on his racial-cultural identity. This can be seen from the above instance and also in his later employment and social circle, where he feels an underlying unease amongst white colleagues and friends that he does not feel with Asians. As has been highlighted in Chapter 13 with reference to the majority of the 'youth of Asian origin', these feelings are located within a context of historical power relations. However, what is particularly important about Akshay's views on the representations of 'Asian culture' is that he places the seemingly celebratory promotion of popular cultural forms (e.g. fashion, music, films) within the context of capitalist machinery. His narrative is littered with references to the 'selling of Asian identity' and is juxtaposed against harsh realities, which he links to his own experience of structural inequalities and the recent physical attack of his cousin by three white youths:

"Of course it's not like these things are in the past anyway, they are very much part and parcel of Britain, whether you want to admit it or not...saris and Indian films are trendy and there's money to be made out of everyone but the hype around Asian culture could reach fever pitch but I wasn't going to get promoted all of a sudden..I was still seeing white guys, less able than me, who had been there hardly two seconds, getting to the top rung...I still had to make the break and go it alone....it didn't stop Rishi being jumped by those white guys did it.....so what good is it all, it doesn't make a blind bit of difference to my life....it's like two different standards operating.... we'll take your films and clothes..but we don't really want you..."
(Akshay, 30, self employed accountant, identifies as Asian).

It is significant that this view resonates primarily with the 'male youths of Asian origin' but also to an extent with the 'white male youths', who perhaps from a position of detachment regarding the salient aspects of commodifications of 'Asian culture' (that as has been emphasised earlier tend to focus on the aesthetic elements such as fashion and beauty) view its proliferation in material terms. As was highlighted in particular through Chapter 9 on the discussion of commodification of minority cultures in

general, what emerges strongly in the narratives of the' youth of Asian origin' is the strategic and selective use of 'Asian culture' that serves to remove Asian people and their lives from 'Asian culture'. This has been highlighted elsewhere in relation to popular culture, for instance, in terms of African-Caribbean peoples and cultures (Gilroy, 1993a). The result of this process has negative consequences on various levels, some and/or all of which are emphasised through the narratives of the 'youth of Asian origin'. Firstly, while certain aspects of 'Asian culture' are thrust into the mainstream spotlight and 'celebrated' other aspects that are not, for instance, historical struggles; religious traditions and festivals etc are retained as markers of historically inferior and primitive positionings. Therefore this orientalist catalogue can be referred to at will to cancel out any seemingly positive advances made through the cultural avenue. As *Jameel* says:

"It doesn't really matter if Bollywood or whatever is in flavour because when it comes to the nitty gritty, you'll be reminded that you're a Paki who comes from a poor, backward country.."
(Jameel, 29yrs, fitness instructor, self identifies as Asian).

This brings me to my second point that seeks to question just how positive the focus on aesthetic aspects of 'Asian culture' are in terms of altering attitudes and realities that have been formed within historical relations of power. The necessary selection behind the 'pick and mix' approach underpinning contemporary popular culture can be viewed on two levels. First, there is the possibility of viewing a harmonious fusion of cultural products as reflection of Britain and in particular London as the home of multi culture. Here then the arena of popular culture takes on the form of a glossy pot in which various cultural elements can be mixed and universally enjoyed. It would be short sighted to dismiss the importance of this view that finds expression in many of the youth narratives (across ethnic and gender divisions) who point to the creative cultural blend and energy of cities such as London, as shall be discussed in the next chapter (e.g. pg 268). Nevertheless there are significant shortcomings to this.

Primarily there is the reality that 'English culture' in its popular hegemonic white form in effect constitutes 'the pot' into which a 'pinch of this' and a 'pinch of that' exotica are added, the aim being to subtly enhance as opposed to change the essence of the pot. From this premise, the quantity and character of 'Asian culture' to be highlighted through and by 'mainstream' popular culture is decided. Therefore, it is the 'tasty spicy food'; the 'colourful and extravagant films'; the 'rhythmic and melodious music' and the 'silky, floaty fashion' that become the favourite children of multicultural Britain. These elements, all of which keep orientalist images of Asianness alive, represent important intertwined facets of 'Asian culture'; an unthreatening and attractive ethnicity that makes it easily saleable on a global level, including back to its origins in the Indian sub continent as well as the Asian diaspora.

In addition, the uncomplicated nature of these elements, depoliticised further through their necessary fusion with familiar 'whiteness', both symbolises and promotes Britain as a multicultural society therefore seeking to aid inclusion and integration of ethnic minorities. It is through these commodifying processes, that cultural elements become increasingly divorced from their histories, origins and peoples to construct (in Barthesian terms) a 'mythical Asian culture' that sustains as opposed to challenges hegemonic ideologies because its construction is strategically constrained from the outset.

This highlights a significant issue that brings me to my third point which is concerned with the submerging and/or neglect of live, individual 'Asian people' within a reification of Asian cultural products. Through the commodification process where those aspects of Asian culture deemed desirable and marketable are focused upon, crucially within an ahistorical and vacuumous context, what results from this can be seen on two intertwining levels. On the one hand, through the narratives of the 'youth of Asian origin', there is a clear sense of anger at being designated as undesirable in terms of their personal, stripped, selves that the process of cultural commodification entails. This substantiates points that underlie

this thesis which seek to contextualize debates on ethnic minority cultural visibility and cultural hybridity within a wider framework that incorporates historical and contemporary processes and feelings relating to racisms and exclusions. As *Shalini* simply says:

"....you know, it's ok to eat our food or listen to some Indian inspired music..wear a sari top on a night out but that doesn't mean white people all of a sudden want to get to know Asian people, does it...it doesn't suddenly mean that we, as we are, are accepted...it's not going to change what's been going on for years and years"
(Shalini, 20yrs, university student, self identifies as Indian).

This is a significant point that is, to a large extent, mirrored in the narratives of many of the 'white youth' who comment on their 'use' of 'Asian cultures' and/or various ethnic minority cultures, be that in terms of exercising rights or fascination with difference however there is very little, if any expression given to the Asian people in their lives simply as *people.* Rather, even the Asian people that are known to them, for example, as 'friends' are consistently referred to only in varying but ultimately similar contexts of 'difference', where cultural traits and products are focused on. In a similar vein, none of the 'white youth' (including the women who have been cited as expressing their interest in 'Asian Culture') had been to popularly known 'Asian areas' such as Southall. Interestingly however, the more mainstream popular Asian areas such as Brick Lane had been visited on more than one occasion. As *Charlene* says:

"...my Asian friends have told me that Southall is the place to go for really nice fabrics and jewellery which is really cheap.. but it's just so much easier to go to Topshop which is familiar and on the high street and they have everything" (Charlene, 20yrs, bar worker, self identifies as British).

It is also significant that the majority of 'youth of Asian origin' (especially the women) also appear more likely to consume the 'Asian culture' that is being sold to them through mainstream avenues as opposed to ethnic minority ones. This is inspite of highlighting the importance of 'Asian retail spaces' elsewhere in their narratives (e.g. see pg 268) and is explained

on two levels, firstly: in terms of having regular access to mainstream retail spaces whereas visits to Southall etc usually constitute 'special trips'. Secondly, in certain cases, there were perceptions of 'better quality' Asian products available in the mainstream market.

In the main, what emerges through the narratives (across ethnicity) is that the 'Asian culture' being consumed is done to a greater/lesser extent within a hegemonic prism of culture, spaces and bodies that allows a play with 'difference' but not its transcendence. Therefore hegemonic power relations come to be maintained through the celebration and crucially, the 'selling of difference' because here the normalisation and superiority of whiteness is preserved.

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Summary

This chapter substantiates what has been discussed earlier in this thesis in terms of the ambiguity associated with the concept of culture and its perceived status as the fixed property of the Other (see Chapter 1) which emerges across the youth narratives. For the youth of Asian origin, 'Asian culture' is presented as a tangible 'thing' that is owned by them and needs to be protected from majority 'hijacking' which was particularly marked within the 'female youth of Asian origin' in terms of 'dress' and 'style'. Related to this point is that the proliferation of 'Asian culture' was largely viewed within the context of a profit making capitalism that had little impact on altering racialized experiences. While the location of 'Asian culture' within a system of commodification was also identified by some of the 'white male youth', there also emerged here a sense of having 'the right' to consume 'Asian culture' and minority cultures in general. This becomes intrinsically linked to a discourse of legitimate/illegitimate claims to the 'British nation' that are articulated in narrow perceptions of Britishness that is equated with whiteness, as

highlighted in the previous chapter. However, different subject positionings emerge within the 'white female youth' who express 'the desire' to consume 'Asian culture'/minority cultures which is articulated through a fascination with 'exotic difference'. As has been discussed in Chapter 1, this difference is taken on to enhance the dominant, normative Self as opposed to decenter it. The important points that emerge in this area include: firstly, the manner in which the humanness of Asian people is disregarded for concentration on an objectified cultural 'difference'. Secondly, it is the aesthetic elements of Asianness that are universally focused on and it is these neutralized products that become easily commodified. Thirdly, regular consumption of 'Asian culture' occurs within 'mainstream spaces' which although particularly true of the 'white women' is also apparent in the consumption practices of the 'women of Asian origin'.

What has also been highlighted in this chapter is the power of mainstream media messages that assume the status of 'truth' and become ingrained. However, in terms of minority media messages there emerged considerable disparity amongst the 'white youth' and 'youth of Asian origin'. While the former in the main viewed these representations as 'authentic' and unproblematic, the latter pointed to the inadequacy of self-representations of 'Asian culture' in terms of lacking universal power and reproducing dominant perceptions. This highlights a significant gap between the motivations of Asian media producers, who view self-representation in itself as important and consumers who see this as insufficient. On this issue, I have drawn attention to the co-optation of certain self-representation projects into the mainstream that may in effect limit their ability to challenge hegemonic images.

Chapter 15: Constraints on 'the Self'

The symbolic nature of dress

The important role played by dress and style in terms of culture and identity has been highlighted earlier in this thesis (pg 174) and emerges as a significant issue in various ways through the narratives of youths (across ethnic divisions) although overwhelmingly amongst the women, reflecting the gendered nature of style. Through the narratives of the women there appears a sense of ambivalence regarding items of dress and products for adornment that varies between ethnicities. For the majority of 'white women', Asian or ethnic dress in general is overtly presented as products that are desired simply as items of fashion that are valued for their aesthetic qualities. However, latent aspects of the narratives point to more substantive symbolic elements involved in these seemingly aesthetic desires. For instance, the 3 'white women' in the sample who expressed regularly wearing Asian and ethnic inspired clothes etc linked their use of Asian dress and forms of adornment such as mehndi/henna to mainstream endorsement, most commonly fashion magazine style advice and images of Western icons such as Madonna. As *Julia* says:

"...I've always liked henna, it's just so pretty, at school there were Indian girls who had it on their hands after being to weddings and since then I've loved it...when I saw Madonna's video, then it was everywhere and girls like me could wear it then... Selfridges had a stand where you could get henna tattoos done" (Julia, 18 yrs, hairdresser, self identifies as British).

This again contextualizes the largely positive responses by the 'white women' to the mainstream visual discourses they were shown, including the image of Madonna's mehndi covered hand (pg 166). Further, it highlights an attitude that goes beyond viewing, for instance, products for adornment simply as fashion accessories. What Julia says above points

to a perception that displays awareness of and serves to maintain boundaries around cultural products that are seen as 'belonging' to Other cultures. This was a common perception amongst the 'white women', who as mentioned earlier were keen to emphasise an interest in 'Asian culture' that crucially does not translate as them being seen as 'stealing' (e.g. see pg 170). As *Kathleen*, who throughout her narration is eager to dispel any possible perception that she is taking something that doesn't belong to her, says:

"I think saris are lovely and I really would love to wear one, I have tried my ex boyfriend's sister's on a few times but I wouldn't go out in one...yeah I'll wear one item such as an Indian looking top with jeans or something but not the whole thing.its not my heritage...I don't want to be seen as a thief"
(Kathleen, 24 yrs, masters student, self identifies as British).

It is interesting that a piece of fabric used to cover the body can have such meaningful associations attributed to it that become representative of complex practices and emotions linked to conceptualizations of heritage, tradition and culture, something that also emerges through the narrations of the 'youth of Asian origin' (as I shall discuss shortly). A further point of interest that emerges through the narratives of some of the 'white women' is the way those fabrics or artefacts seen as belonging to Other cultures are used as a means of enhancing 'the Self'[5] and more to the point aiding the Self in its quest to be 'different' or unique from those perceived as being the 'same as' the Self. In other words, to take the example of *Anjie*, her narrative revolves around having grown up in a predominantly white environment in Devon and her subsequent negotiations of 'difference' in terms of skin colours and cultures that she has experienced since moving to London. Here ethnic dress/fashion becomes a strategic tool for when she visits Devon:

"...as I said before, London has everything, I love it here...you've got all the fashions and uniqueness that you just don't get in Devon...like whenever I go home, I'll wear maybe something abit ethnic and everyone

[5] The notion of 'the Self' and identity is recognised as problematic and complex, as highlighted on pgs 44 ; 104

is like, 'wow', of course wearing that sort of thing in London is no big deal but back in Devon when you're probably the only white person doing that, it's good to stand out and everyone thinks I'm super trendy"
(Anjie, 28yrs, IT recruitment officer, self identifies as British).

It is significant that through the adoption of a 'different' dress to the norm in terms of the 'white body' wrapped in a piece of exotica in a predominantly 'white space' serves to elevate or revere that 'white body' through difference. This contrasts with traditionally negative attitudes to the black or 'Asian body' draped in 'different' dress even though this could be said to 'belong to them'. As *Akshay* states:

"...where I grew up we were the only Asians and my mum just picking me up from school wearing a sari was the trigger for a whole barrage of abuse the next day" (Akshay,30yrs,accountant,self identifies as Asian).

This serves to highlight the manner in which bodies and skin come to be marked in terms of power relations that attribute 'desirability' or 'undesirability' to them. In this sense, dress as a piece of fabric to cover the skin has little bearing on the way the skin and body is perceived, rather the skin will always be seen. Therefore dress depending on which body/skin it covers and the space in which it does so either serves to enhance the skin or confirm its inferior positioning.

Related to this point, the narratives of the 'female youth of Asian origin' add interesting dimensions to the discussion. First, as has already been highlighted (e.g. see pg 233) many of the 'youth of Asian origin' but the women in particular, express resentment at 'white people' wearing Asian clothes and adornments, which typically was viewed in terms of cultural hijacking or 'muscling in'. Therefore, in these narratives, Asian and Eastern dress in general is regarded in terms that denote territory and ownership based on 'race' and ethnicity. As *Mia* says:

"...I know it sounds irrational but when I see teenage white girls wearing bindis, it really gets to me and I think, you've got no right to wear it, it belongs to my people, my culture...and the most ironic thing is that I hardly ever wear it myself" (Mia, 27yrs,teacher,self identifies as Indian).

What is of significance is that from the general perspectives of the 'white youths' and the 'youth of Asian origin', focus is exclusively on Asian and ethnic dress which ties in with earlier comments on the marked character of Othered cultures as well as the attribution of culture exclusively to the Other (e.g. see pg 38). This is illustrated in the quotations given here that link culture and identity to ethnic dress and therefore authentically belonging to marked bodies. Contrastingly items such as jeans, while generally being seen as representative of the West, are not expressed as belonging to a particular 'race' or ethnicity. Rather, through its universal wear it assumes a state of normality and ordinariness whereby the attire originating from Eastern regions retains the status of difference and spectacle.

Secondly, there were comments from most of the 'men and women of Asian origin' that direct the onus of upholding cultural traditions through dress onto women. Regarding the latter, there is evidence of a high level of ambivalence regarding Asian dress that ties in with its important role in representing cultural identity. To quote *Mia* again:

"...I love wearing saris and bindis...I feel I should wear them more often but practically it's abit difficult...well, it's not that difficult I suppose, plenty of women do but I suppose for our generation, we've grown up in Britain so feel comfortable wearing Western clothes...I do think sometimes that it's really sad that I only wear my Indian outfits at weddings, especially when you see white women wearing saris at Indian weddings... it makes me feel bad because the Indian clothes are my roots which I'm proud of..." (Mia, 27yrs, teacher, self identifies as Indian).

This is an important point that again reflects the complex and contradictory emotions arising from minority and majority cultural positionings that the 'youth of Asian origin' in general have highlighted through their narratives. However, in relation to attitudes to dress/style etc it is exclusively the 'women of Asian origin' who express some tension between being of Asian origin and being born and brought up in Britain. As has been mentioned earlier in this thesis the 'burden' of preserving

'cultural tradition' tends to fall mainly on women's shoulders (e.g. see pg 51) and this is something that resonates in the narratives of the 'women of Asian origin'. Feelings of guilt and pressure emerge from expectations within 'the Asian community' in terms of their role as women in maintaining cultural identity and convention, most notably through dress. This is confirmed by *Jameel's* view that ignores the Asian male's responsibility towards maintaining 'national identity' while also serving to reflect the gendered remit of dress/style. As he says:

"Shalwar kameez represents our national identity and we should be proud of it because it's very important to hold on to tradition, nowadays there are hardly any young Asian women wearing shalwar kameez, instead people like Madonna go around wearing saris and shalwar kameez" (Jameel, 29yrs, fitness instructor, self identifies as Asian).

According to some of the 'women of Asian origin', such expectations are seen as attributing excessive responsibility on them, who felt that their personal freedom on the simple level of 'wearing what they felt like wearing' was restricted. This then led to feelings of ambivalence towards Asian dress that can never be seen 'just as clothing' but in effect constitutes an 'identity badge' at all times. As Raveena says:

"A dress is just a dress or socks are just socks..yeah but a sari is never just a sari so for instance, one morning I might just wake up wanting to wear one, for no particular reason but then I think, people will stare, there'll be questions from white work colleagues or assumptions that it's a special cultural day, some Asians will commend me, other Asians will think I'm not trendy...it's just ridiculous and too much hassle so I don't bother" (Raveena, 30yrs, marketing manager, self identifies as Asian Sikh).

The issue of external expectations and pressures as constraint on the subject's sense of freedom emerges as an important theme, beyond discussions on dress, across many of the youth narratives. A discussion of these factors is something that the remainder of this chapter shall concentrate on.

Family/Community Expectations

A common theme of many of the biographies (across gender and ethnicity) is the large extent to which family/community attitudes and experiences act as a restrictive and compelling force, which can be seen on various levels. For instance, *Jameel's* biography is constructed around feelings of inadequacy and neglect experienced within the family as a middle child growing up with four brothers with 'big personalities who always got the attention'. His narration moves through a portrayal of the early Self as subdued and subservient towards an adult Self that deliberately goes against the grain in various areas of life and especially in terms of what his family expects of him. The underlying aim being a need for self-expression, self-representation and self-decision however, his life choices remain framed within the expectations of others, albeit in terms of challenging them. As he says:

"...it took a while for me to find myself really.. but I feel very different to when I was younger where it was such a battle to be heard and seen at home...don't get me wrong, there was a lot of love and care but my brothers were always very vocal and upfront so I became seen as the quiet one where my opinion never really counted....then I don't know what happened but after college..I suppose, you could say, I rebelled...didn't follow the expected academic route, started living with girls that I knew wouldn't amount to anything but I knew my parents didn't like it so that was reason enough to do it..and I'm still doing it...."
(Jameel, 29yrs, fitness instructor, self identifies as Asian).

The assertion of the adult Self in all aspects of life can also be seen through *David's* narrative, that again appears to stem from growing up with brothers whom he perceived as getting more parental attention which resulted in a need to 'compete' for everything from love to toys and now in adult life can be intrinsically linked to an assertive masculinity both in the public and private sphere. As he says:

"I have to check myself, because I can get so aggressive and competitive over the littlest things, even at home relaxing with my wife and then when I calm down, I know where it comes from but in that moment all rationality just disappears...I always say that when we have kids, we'll treat them

equally and always be there to listen..it's very important otherwise you'll either spend your life with your head down or ramming your point of view down people's throats" (David, 25yrs,civil servant, self identifies as English).

Through the narratives there is also evidence of negative experiences within the family having a lasting impact on personal beliefs and perceptions that is illustrated, for example, through *Julia*. Her narration highlights a deep hostility towards 'black people' which takes the form of attributing to them numerous stereotypical labels and associations. This appears to be intrinsically linked to her father leaving the family home when she was a teenager, to be with a 'black woman', which has subsequently engendered a negative and one dimensional perception of 'difference'. As she says:

"..I mean you do hear about certain types of people doing certain things....I don't want this to be seen as racist but it's always the black people round here that are getting into trouble with the police and going round in big gangs...I do think there's a lack of morals...after all a black woman stole my dad"
(Julia, 18 yrs old, hairdresser, self identifies as British)

The impact of the family and wider community on the Self also emerges through some of the narratives in terms of attitudes that serve to challenge/question life choices and decisions made by subjects, which has impacted on dynamics within the family. For instance, an extensive part of *Julian's* narrative concentrates on current hostilities within the family that have resulted from his brother's relationship with an Asian woman, of which his parents do not approve. What emerges through Julian's narrative is a sense of shock and disappointment at his parent's attitude coupled with a fear of falling in love with a woman of a different ethnic origin to him. As he says:

"...it's selfish I suppose but I can't help thinking about myself through all this, I mean who knows, I could fall in love tomorrow with an Indian girl, a Chinese girl, a black girl and we've always grown up with the idea that

love is love and now all of a sudden, I find there's all these rules and conditions...it's horrible, I can't believe my parents think in this way..they're educated people who have travelled the world....I don't know if I could go through what Carl is going through so it just makes me think it's a lot easier to stick to the safe option..."
(Julian, 21yrs, masters student, self identifies as British).

This experience finds some resonance with *Anil*, of Indian origin who is engaged to *Kathy*, an English woman, on the basis of which neither side of the family is happy. Anil's narrative highlights an ongoing emotional struggle between on the one hand, family and community expectations that centre on the importance of compatibility on the level of culture, ethnicity and religion. These are issues that Anil presents as being regularly and overtly emphasised by his family only since his relationship with Kathy. In addition (as highlighted earlier on pg 225) the crux of Anil's narrative hinges on his expectations of a 'natural' alignment with other Asians and the importance he places on his ethnic roots. This is juxtaposed against a lived reality that serves to challenge the 'natural' expectations relating to culture and ethnicity that he has held for so long, the most prominent of which is his relationship with Kathy which he presents as being based on feelings such as love and traits such as, personality. What emerges then is an ongoing personal battle between the importance of humanity versus constructed divisions. As he says:

"...it's a difficult one because I love her so much and I know I want to spend the rest of my life with her..and of course it's difficult with the family stuff but it wouldn't bother me so much if the things my parents were saying I didn't feel abit too...you know having the same colour skin, the same culture, the same mother tongue but then at the same time, I know that with things like language, while I can speak Hindi, I don't and my parents have always spoken English with us so why all of a sudden is that a big deal.." (Anil, 26yrs, teacher, self identifies as Asian).

Further pressures emanating from a combination of family and society come to bear particularly on the women I spoke to (across ethnic boundaries) in relation to their expected role both within the family and society. For instance, *Carla's* narration highlights a submerging of the

Self in terms of her identity and career ambitions at a law firm, where her partner also works, which will now take a backseat to a focus on family life in order to fulfil her partner's and society's expectations. As she explains:

"It sounds a terrible thing to say but it's not something that if I'm honest I'm looking forward to..it wasn't planned but Craig has wanted children for a while and I'm in my thirties now so I suppose it's expected isn't it.. I can already feel it's going to be a big change for me...already Craig is talking to me about his day at work as if I have nothing to do with that place anymore and is saying that there'll be no need for me to rush back to work after the baby is born (pause) I feel awful for feeling the way I do but I'm sure I'll want to be back at work straight away..I suppose that will make me a bad mother though..." (Carla, 30yrs, lawyer, self identifies as British).

A similar sense of being caught up in self sacrifice emanates from *Riza's* narration as she describes having always lived her life according to the expectations of others, first her family and then her husband which she presents as being a pleasant but 'caged in' life. Her subsequent divorce and move from Birmingham to London marks a point of transition in her biography where she presents herself as being released from the cultural and gendered ideals that she was expected to fulfil and instead reclaim her personal identity, creativity and freedom. As she says:

"...it's a case of if it ain't broke then why fix it so because I was pretty happy and led a nice life there was nothing overtly wrong so my parents and everyone, including my husband (laughs) couldn't understand the problem....it's difficult to explain but it's like I didn't feel true to myself, I suppose I've never had the dream of meeting the right man and getting married, being a mother and all that..it was more my parents dream, like all parents I guess... ....it was difficult for everyone but now I'm independent, doing what I love and finally I do feel fulfilled and strong enough to do things the way I want to do them..."
(Riza, 25yrs, fashion designer, self identifies as British Asian).

The theme of reaching the ideals set by family and society constitutes a significant issue for many of the youths of Asian origin in particular, where forces such as love and duty together with a lived reality as an ethnic minority serve to supersede personal desires and goals. For instance,

Akshay points to the expectations within his family and Asian families in general that place value on an academic or business career. He presents this as especially acute within his family as his parents and close relatives either work in an academic or business environment. What emerges through his narrative is that the field of accountancy, in which he is now self-employed was less a choice based on personal interest but more a 'choice' made to make his parents proud of him and provide them with assurance about his professional and financial security. As he states:

"It's a common saying isn't it that Asians are expected to be doctors or businessmen...so me pursuing music as a career was never an option, it's not like it was a flat out 'no' but mum and dad being teachers, education was a must and there was always the sense that we have to be equipped with the best tools possible to succeed because of the colour of our skin....when I qualified as an accountant, everyone was so happy..apart from me (laughs) I have very little passion for it and there were some difficult times when I was working as an employee..... but it allows me to provide well for my family and at the end of the day that's the important thing...you have to look at the bigger picture, not just yourself.." (Akshay, 30 yrs, accountant, self identifies as Asian).

Inclusions and Exclusions

As has been highlighted in Chapter 13, the narratives of the 'youth of Asian origin' explicitly link their 'non white skin colour' and experiences of racisms to a sense of emotional and structural exclusion to British society. However, as has been illustrated, individual feelings of exclusion also emerge in some form in relation to 'whiteness' in certain narratives of the 'white youth'. In addition, levels of inclusion and exclusion can be seen to emerge through the narratives that may be linked to forms of cultural exclusion and external constraints that do not reflect conventional socio-economic definitions of exclusion. For instance, *Charlene's* biography points to a sense of exclusion that stemmed from her move to London from a small village, four years earlier, in order to pursue a modelling opportunity. What emerges are feelings of isolation that serve

to contrast an "intimate community life" with the "coldness and hecticness" of the metropolis. As she says:

"I've kind of got used to London now I suppose but it's just so...impersonal and elevated if you know what I mean....I was born and brought up in a little village, with lots of countryside and little shops where everyone knows you.. it's more close and real....there's a quiet togetherness" (Charlene, 20yrs bar worker, identifies as British).

In addition, Charlene's narrative also highlights the existence of external constraints that serve to keep her located within this isolating enclosure. These emerge largely in terms of contractual obligations linked to her modelling contract that require her to be residing in London for its duration. Her narrative comes to be constructed on the basis of necessarily "being tied" to the City that itself becomes the focus of her resentment, exclusion and limit to personal freedom.

However, it is significant that in several other narratives (in particular those of the 'youth of Asian origin') the urban context, in terms of London, emerges within narrations hinged on experiences of exclusion, as a space where feelings and practices of inclusion have the potential to be realized. This is identified largely on two levels, firstly: the ethnic minority areas of London in general or Asian areas in particular (e.g. see pg 55). It is paradoxically through these 'separated spaces' that a sense of inclusion is fostered, not in terms of *inclusion into mainstream society* but on the basis of self worth and capability. These specific cultural areas are seen to be an important representation of minority cultural existence and self sufficiency that exist alongside the dominant culture and as such constitute forms of inclusion on the Asian Self's terms within the urban space. However, the marking out of 'separate spaces' needs to viewed in terms of an exclusion from both hegemonic culture and material resources that places a necessary restriction on the sense of inclusion on terms dictated by and for the 'Othered Self'. Further, to recall points made

in the previous chapter (pg 254) there is a devaluing of these spaces in terms of consumer practices, by Asians themselves.

This limitation is addressed to an extent through the second level of inclusion that emerges through the youth narratives. Here, Central London is viewed as a space where both processes of interaction and inclusion may be facilitated. The former is largely highlighted in terms of the narratives of the 'white youth' who highlight aspects of the metropolis as fostering a high level of interaction with a variety of peoples and cultures. As *Carla* says:

"...places like London and New York are great because there's so much in one place and so much opportunity to experience and learn more...through the universities, you get to meet so many different people especially with all the overseas students and then all the places to eat and bars to go to..so you get to experience things from all over the world" (Carla, 30yrs, lawyer, self identifies as British).

Issues of inclusion within the narratives of the youth of Asian origin hinge on the same areas as above, with the existence of 'cultural spaces' within the metropolis being viewed as an important means of facilitating inclusion into hegemonic culture. Here, the placing of 'Asian culture' in terms of club nights, restaurants etc *within* the central metropolis comes to be identified in terms of acceptance and inclusion to an extent. This marks an important contrast to responses of the 'youth of Asian origin' to the location of 'Asian culture' in the hegemonic space of mainstream magazines, as has been illustrated earlier (see Chapters 10 and 11). This may be linked to a fixed and narrow form of mainstream representation that is perceived in terms of magazine discourses which is rooted in a racialized consumerism. Conversely, the existence of 'Asian culture' within the dynamic and fluid space of the metropolis, where dialogue and bodies meet, may be viewed in less constraining terms. However, it must be noted that the existence of 'minority cultures' even within the central metropolis is often in terms of segregated spaces such as 'China Town' in Soho. As discussed in the previous chapter, these spaces offer a restricted 'taste' of Othered cultures that fall in line with hegemonic

representations and serve as 'knowledge' of those cultures. The dynamism of the metropolis that houses 'different cultures' must be seen as rooted within processes of commodification that enable Othered cultures to be sampled amidst an invisible background of hegemonic culture.

In addition, what emerges through the narratives is the means by which individuals try to overcome their excluded or 'minority positionings'. This has already been highlighted for instance, in terms of (imaginary) exclusive racial and cultural alliances or the acquisition of 'knowledge' about 'different cultures'. However, what emerges through some of the 'white male' narratives is the play on gender divisions in order to facilitate inclusion into an Asian-oriented social group. In *Andrew's* case, for example, this becomes linked to elements of fear and self-preservation. As he says:

"I've got alot of Asian friends, mainly from college and uni so it's always been important for me to know everything I can about them, as you would anyway with people you spend alot of time with but also where most of your social group are different from you, on the level of not knowing what they might be saying about me, so I've made an effort to pick up some of the language...most of the time, I've been able to bridge the gap...for example, at uni, it was me and two girls who were the only non-Asians in our particular group and it was mainly them who became more outsiders than me because after all, us boys had football, computer games, cars and all that in common"
(Andrew, 28yrs, publishing exec, self identifies as British).

Here, differences that may be linked to ideas of 'race', culture and ethnicity, which could be used as a means of restricting entry to a group or be seen as reasons for the restricted entry to a group come to be played down. The subject is interpellated into the group through the strategic use of gender, which highlights the differential levels of inclusion/exclusion as well as the complex 'uses' of social divisions in daily practice. Through other narratives, the sense of inclusion comes through the experience of 'authentic' relations, and here *Kathleen's* narrative is instructive, for she says:

"...I went out with an Indian guy for 2yrs and he was really into all the Indian films and music and stuff and naturally we'd go to places together which was great because like I told you, I was always drawn to that stuff and then being with someone like that made it more fun but also...more real...it's difficult to explain but going out with someone Indian made it more real...more true..."

Kathleen therefore constructs her association with 'someone Indian' as an enabling factor to take part in Indian 'stuff' making her cultural interest more legitimate and therefore a shield against possible exclusion by virtue of her 'whiteness.' To continue:

"...actually it was with him that I first went to an Indian do...and as I was saying even though I felt more comfortable in that environment through knowing him, I got the sense that his friends didn't really like me being there... I was the only non Indian or Asian in the group and I felt that sometimes I was pushed out or patronised....like going out for an Indian meal and then one of his mates constantly checking to see that the food wasn't too spicy for me....or talking in their own language..."

(Kathleen, 24yrs, masters student, self identifies as British).

Through the course of her narrative, it becomes clearer that these feelings of needing a 'legitimate' alliance are inextricably linked to her own feelings of 'illegitimacy'. Kathleen consistently constructs herself as an 'impostor' in the 'Asian cultural sphere' and at various points in her narrative is keen to dispel any negative motivations. As has already been highlighted (see pg 243) this theme marks a split between the male and female white youth, with women on the whole being more inclined to present themselves as innocent spectators and or partakers of 'Asian culture' as opposed to trying to 'steal' elements. However, what also arises through Kathleen's narrative, along with most of the 'white women' I spoke to, is this sense of 'inauthenticity' that becomes linked to perceptions/expectations within her 'own community'. In other words, Kathleen's interest in 'Asian culture' has been met with 'ridicule' and 'dismissiveness' by certain members of her family, friends and in particular, current boyfriend. Her insecurities come to be fed through a

combination of the above dynamics that all serve to frame her perceptions of Self and 'cultures' as well as act to constrain and question her taste and desire.

Perceptions within 'the community' that impact on the Self and a sense of inclusion can also be seen through *Ayesha's* narrative that point to, amongst other things, 'language' as a tool for exclusion. This comes to the fore in terms of 'Asian community' groups and events that she has consistently attempted to participate in however is "made to feel like an outsider" because she doesn't know "any Asian languages well enough". This sense of exclusion is identified through subtle processes that serve to isolate and question the subject's 'authentic' place in the 'cultural group'. As she says:

"I used to be really eager about getting involved in meetings and events because it's important to take part in your own culture but it's such alot of politics that goes on that now I just don't feel like getting involved at all. For a start you have a certain group who make all the decisions and choices and consider themselves at the top of the chain...they can speak Urdu perfectly and always come wearing Asian clothes....if you don't do either of those things you get sidelined...that's how I feel and it's not fair because I really want to be a part of it all" (Ayesha, 19yrs, beauty therapist, identifies as Asian).

This serves to highlight the complex processes of inclusion and exclusion that do not always operate in one-dimensional terms, for instance, on the basis of 'race' and ethnicity. It highlights the intricacies involved within such categories that problematise notions of homogeneity within groups, as well as the power of cultural tools such as 'language' to both include and exclude.

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Summary

This chapter has illustrated the importance of 'dress' as a symbol of identity and culture, in particular minority cultures. This is reinforced through the concerns of the 'white women' that they may be seen as 'stealing' through their consumption of 'Asian style'. In addition, 'Asian women' are attributed with the responsibility for upholding Asian cultural traditions through the donning of Asian dress. In this sense, the functional role of Asian dress emerges as a burden to some of the 'female youth of Asian origin' who have come to associate Asian dress with cultural expectations that limit a sense of personal freedom. The issue of personal freedom arises in several of the narratives (across gender and ethnicity) that while involving cultural expectations in some cases (for instance, the expectation of 'Asian parents' for their children to enter certain professions) point to issues that provide a means for common identifications aside from 'race' and culture. For instance, alignments forged through gender positioning; familial and societal expectations of women's 'natural' roles as wives and/or mothers; intergenerational conflicts, and a sense of inclusion/exclusion in relation to urban settings. This latter theme emerges as a significant area for the possibility of unity that is not necessarily just contained within essentialist constructions, through the sharing of social spaces. While certain youth narratives point to the isolation felt in a large city such as London, the majority (across gender and ethnicity) highlighted its cosmopolitan character as a source of comfort and plurality. However, I also draw attention to the contradictions involved within the metropolis that simultaneously 'houses difference' while 'selling difference' in segregated spaces amidst a normalized background of hegemonic culture.

Concluding Discussion

This research study has focused on the representation and consumption of Asianness within a context of the proliferation of 'Asian culture' in Western popular culture in general and the British media in particular. These processes have been explored through a focus on magazine visual discourses coupled with youth readings and narratives. This concluding discussion then seeks to highlight and reflect on the study itself and the salient issues that have emerged through a review of secondary data coupled with my analysis of magazine visual discourses and interviews with cultural producers and especially young cultural consumers. I shall begin with some reflections on the research study that are drawn from my earlier methodological discussion (see pg 147).

Reflections on the Research

This thesis has attempted to highlight issues of 'race' culture and Otherness in relation to the neglected areas of South Asian representations within magazine discourses with a particular focus on exploring orientalist practices. Firstly, an important point that has been emphasised through this thesis is the invisible and normative status of 'white culture' and 'whiteness' (for theoretical discussion see pgs 33-35) although I have illustrated ambivalences here within the youth narratives (see pg 220). I have drawn attention to the naturalising power of whiteness in terms of analysis of visual discourses and youth readings and narratives (white English and Asian origin) and how this impacts on representations of Asianness. However, ultimately the manner in which the research has been framed places 'Asian culture/people' as the 'object' of study which reproduces orientalist premises. This remains the case despite including self-representations as Asianness is still the overt focus. Therefore, it may have been more of a challenge to hegemonic assumptions, to have also included an 'explicit' focus on representations of whiteness as part of the research design/questions.

Secondly, the combination of methods that have been used in this thesis has enabled the collection of rich and varied material that has provided an insight into areas of media production, representations and interpretations that are located in subjective experience. A salient finding of my research has been the binary positionings of 'white youth' and 'youth of Asian origin' that are based on essentialist notions of 'race' and culture. Although I have tried to incorporate the views and experiences of racial/ethnic identities historically erected in opposition, it may have proved transgressive to include the opportunity for dialogue *between* the youths in the form of, focus group discussions. For instance, an airing of responses to visual discourses in group settings (across ethnicity/gender) may have enabled an active exchange of perceptions and lived experiences. This may have provided a space for hegemonic representations and world-views to be illuminated and perhaps challenged within majority and minority exchanges. The importance of interpersonal dialogues as a potential avenue through which dominant ideological practices may be questioned is elaborated on later in this discussion (e.g. see pg 290). In a similar vein, I could have created space for British 'mainstream' and 'Asian' magazine producers to come together with cultural consumers. Although the practicality of this is questionable (considering the time constraints that have been highlighted in terms of the former, see Chapter 6) it may be an effective means of questioning orientalist representations. Further, it may serve to limit the gap between motivations of producers and expectations of consumers in the area of self-representation and constitutes an area where future research may be conducted.

Further areas of research that could build on my study have also been identified in terms of a transnational approach that for instance, incorporates visual discourses and contextualized responses from the Indian sub-continent as comparison to the 'British Asian' experience. This could also be extended to include a comparison with different 'Asian diasporic' settings e.g. America. In addition, within national contexts, areas beyond London could be explored in terms of contextualized

responses and inter-ethnic dynamics. These may be used as a basis for comparison, for instance: areas of high/low Asian concentration; contexts of urban/countryside or across generations.

Central Issues & Research Advances

The fibre of this study is the continued salience of 'race' in cultural representations and youth interactions and identities. As I have reviewed in Chapter 1 (pg 39) much recent work has attempted to shift the focus on 'race' and skin colour towards a concentration on fragmented identities that are formed within the diaspora. This has emphasised the formation of hybrid identities which seek to displace historical forces and essentialisms in favour of 'new ethnicities'. While my study acknowledges the value of this approach, overwhelming evidence from an analysis of magazine representations and youth biographies serves to question the extent to which non-essentialist identifications can and do exist in view of the pervasiveness of historically formed positionalities based on unequal power relations. Moreover, I have demonstrated how a theory and practice of hybridity is dependent on commodifiable difference and therefore intrinsically linked to structural, racial inequality. At the same time, not unlike the 'new ethnicities' approach, I have attempted to seek out areas of commonality that emerged in the youth narratives upon which non-essentialist relations can be built, on which I offer a fuller discussion later in this conclusion (e.g. see pg 297). However, where I differ from much of the work on 'new ethnicities' is that I do not deem it realistic to displace the centrality of 'race' and history in the formation of youth identities. Rather my research serves to reclaim the importance of history and socio-economic divisions in contemporary settings and to advocate a need for illuminating the essentialist constructions that these processes give rise to. For this purpose, I have highlighted the continuing importance of Said's Orientalism (1978) to explorations of 'race' and culture however; I have extended his analysis of the theory and practice of orientalism to realms of popular culture. This has been in order to demonstrate the insidious nature of racist representations in what are all

too often regarded as just arenas of 'light entertainment' and 'pleasure': magazines. My research has also sought to problematize the very concept of self-orientalism that appears to have taken on an organic existence in much work on this area. Research findings also question the ability of self-representation to challenge hegemonic projects in a constrained and unequal production environment. In addition, my research has extended work on Otherness through exploring cultural representations and perceptions of 'the Other', not as 'distant' but as 'close' and a part of daily interactions that nevertheless constructs British Asians in terms of racialized difference.

Finally, I hope to have demonstrated the worth of varied, situated and contextualized knowledge that goes beyond making abstract theoretical assumptions about individuals/groups. It is important to take the time to listen to people's experiences and value their opinions of the cultural texts that we, as social researchers, choose to comment on often without this crucial heterogeneous input.

Discussion of Salient Findings

I shall now elaborate on the points emphasised above. The following areas (as recalled from the introductory discussion on pg 9), have constituted central issues of investigation. These have included exploring:

- *The parts of Asian culture that are promoted and capitalised on by the forces of global capitalism.*
- *The manner in which Asian culture is re-presented and the context in which it is received by young cultural consumers.*
- *The extent to which British Asian media producers collude and/or challenge 'mainstream' portrayals through self representations.*
- *The impact that such representations have on the inter-relational dynamics between youth of 'Asian origin' and 'white origin' within a wider context of colonialism, orientalism and racism.*

First and foremost to emerge is the importance that must be placed on historical forces in issues of cultural construction and representation. This can be seen on various levels, for instance the structural and ideological processes involved in British colonisation of India (see Chapter 5). I have aimed to illustrate the orientalist constructions of peoples and cultures that hinge on racialized conceptions of 'difference' while postulating a white Western superior versus Eastern/Asian inferior dynamic.

The discussion on orientalist discourses during the British Raj has also highlighted ambivalences to the masculinity of Empire through 'white female' representations of India that served to counter notions of absolute difference between West and East (see pg 89). However, I have also drawn attention to the complicity of 'white women' in the imperialist project through their inferiorising representations of Indian peoples (see pg 91). Secondly, I have highlighted subversions to Empire via nationalist challenges that served to counter orientalist imagery through the use of satire and parody (see pg 91). However, it is important to note that these self-representations also served to consolidate indigenous male dominance through ideological imagery that sought to keep Indian women within conventional domestic roles (see pg 91/92). The association/expectation of 'Asian women' in line with orientalist perceptions (e.g. in terms of demure and passive character) was something that emerged amongst the views of the majority of youth and was challenged only by the 'women of Asian origin'. This was something that was particularly noted in responses to the visual images of idealized 'Asian womanhood' (see pgs 173;178). In addition, there was a naturalized responsibility attributed to 'Asian women' (including by the 'women of Asian origin' themselves) for upholding cultural traditions through, for instance, wearing 'Asian dress'. This subsequently created a sense of burden amongst the 'women of Asian origin' who saw Asian dress as a 'badge of ethnicity' as opposed to something they could just enjoy wearing (see pg 261). These examples serve to highlight heterogeneous experiences within Asianness and ambivalences arising

in areas of self-representation, an issue I shall return to later in this discussion.

The inclusion of gender dimensions and 'subaltern' representations in a discussion of orientalism can be seen to fill the gaps of Said's Orientalism (1978). However this does not alter the significant material inequality, unequal power relations / positionings as well as fixed, stereotypical and homogenous images of peoples, regions and cultures that ensued from over one hundred years of subjugation. While there may be nothing particularly new or surprising about what has been highlighted here, the crucial point that emerges through this thesis is the durability and tenacity of orientalist processes and portrayals cemented during the imperialist project, in the contemporary post modern era. This has been illustrated through the racialized socio-economic positionings of Asians who came to Britain post second-world war and the generations since who have been born and brought up here (as profiled in Chapter 2). However, particular emphasis in this thesis has been given to cultural representations of Asians (as located within historical/material processes) coupled with perceptions and self-perceptions of them and 'their culture', as I discuss overleaf.

The chapters illustrating the representation of 'Asian culture' through popular 'mainstream' magazines reflect the large extent to which portrayals are based on invoking historically engrained ideologies of difference that are centred on Western superiority versus Eastern inferiority. I have attempted to illustrate how contemporary visual discourses (through sign associations and language construction) serve to present 'Asian culture', places and peoples as fixed within nostalgic colonial binds that serve to emphasise in one dimensional terms, their 'mysticism' and 'primitivism' as poor parallel to white Western material power and modernity (see pgs 160 -165 for an example). The latter is presented as a homogenous and all-encompassing force that has both the knowledge and right to authorize what is desirable about 'Asian culture', pluck it from its roots and detach it from undesirable bodies.

Crucially, I have emphasised in this thesis that it is ultimately those aspects of 'difference' that can be sold or rendered saleable in an uncomplicated manner, coupled with facilitating inclusion of potentially disruptive difference, that makes the culturally desirable grade (e.g. see pgs 152 ; 253). Aesthetic products of dress and adornment easily meet the criteria when paradoxically marked as 'ethnic' while simultaneously being stripped of ethnic origins and substance and globally marketed through mainstream, culturally neutral products and mainstream magazines/retailers. Further, their representation takes place primarily through the desirable 'white female' body (e.g. see Madonna's embodiment of Asianness, as discussed on pgs 166 -70). The hegemony of whiteness ensures its popular legitimacy and through femininity taps into the gendered market of fashion and beauty while reviving orientalist representations of the feminine and conquerable East.

The reduction of 'Asian culture' into 'pick and mix' elements that are transmitted and esteemed through 'whiteness,' is a crucial element of the commodification project. As such, 'Asian culture' and Asianness is presented as free-floating, without 'valued' representation on the global level, which makes for easy appropriation (e.g. see pgs 168 -169). This point may be illustrated in terms of cultural icons such as 'Beckham' and 'Madonna', *who define* popular culture on the global stage, whereas 'Asian culture' *comes to be defined* globally in hegemonic terms through white usage and representation. Where Asian cultural ambassadors are highlighted, it is consistently through Western comparative that seeks to familiarize the strange (see pg 4). Therefore Asianness and Asian bodies viewed through an orientalist and racialized lens come to be at best, devalued, 'spoken for' and 'spoken about' and at worst, erased. However, this is not to suggest that minority self-representation projects are necessarily a panacea and the limitations and contradictions involved in self-representation has been highlighted through the course of this thesis (e.g. see pgs 37;201) and shall be elaborated on shortly.

In the above context, it becomes crucial to view the hegemonic projection of 'Asian culture' through a 'racialized regime of representation' (Hall, 1997) that is rooted in material interests and processes. Images of Otherness can be seen to exist in a fixed, essentialist mould in order to sustain boundaries of 'difference' within and between nations and peoples in order to fetishize Otherness in terms of 'desire' and 'fear'. These processes have been illustrated through mainstream visual discourses (e.g. pg 186) and the narratives of the 'white youth' (e.g. pg 269). Commodifying culture through arenas of 'pleasure' then serves to satisfy a 'desire' for and fascination with 'difference' through being able to 'purchase' aspects of it to enhance the Self and 'become different'. It also serves to allay 'fear' through its condensing of 'difference' into baseless commodities that can be taken over at will. Presenting such strategic processes through rose coloured filters of 'East meets West' 'fusion' or 'cultural hybridity' serves to depoliticize and make ahistorical issues of culture, 'race' and identity (see pg 42). More to the point, ethnic minority groups who are identified primarily by racial markers through cultural veneers, come to be 'excluded' further as opposed to 'included' through this cultural fetishization. Souls, histories and struggles are submerged within saleable commodities that are presented in harmonious terms of mutual cultural exchange. Crucially through processes of hybridity and fusion, the power of whiteness retains its position of normality (e.g. see discussion on pg 253). On this basis attention to the concepts and practices of 'diaspora' and hybridity can only be useful if placed within the context of unequal power relations that reflect the historical construction and entwinement of orientalist and racial structures/ideologies. To go further than this, material from the present study points to representations and perceptions of 'hybridity' and 'fusion' as a means of paradoxically reinforcing binary positions of hegemonic Self and racialized Other (e.g. see pgs 188 -191). As such, these practices become avenues through which historically structured power dynamics are maintained and consistently revived. In viewing processes of 'hybridity' as a means of temporarily taking on 'difference' as opposed to transcending essentialist difference, hybridity can be placed on a continuum of Othering practices

and ideologies, such as orientalism. This serves to challenge the focus on its transgressive abilities in favour of its embodiment of power relations and social divisions, such as 'race' which constructions of hybridity continue to be largely based on.

To whom the agents of 'mainstream' popular culture speak and are intended to speak is made clear through constructions of meaning encased within glossy visuals and captivating lines. The 'mainstream magazine producers' in particular emphasised the importance of drawing on simple and 'familiar' associations / connotations in their formulation of discourse. This seemed to override the importance of producing objective representations and can be seen to largely reflect hegemonic world views and Eurocentric positionings (see pg 183). This is also made clear through the manner in which these representations are received by individual youths that pivot on differential racial positionings and experiences. While the preferred orientalist meanings involved in the mainstream magazine representations of 'Asian culture' were read by all the youths, they were largely accepted by those of 'white English' origin who attributed 'truth' and 'knowledge' to these sources with little or no question. This reflected, to a large extent, *dominant readings* of hegemonic visual discourses (this is despite overlapping of and flexibility between reading categories, see pg 144). This finding substantiates points made in earlier parts of the study on the power of the media within popular culture to transmit knowledge and meaning, which constitute regimes of truth through visual discourses (as referred to on pg 16). However, through the *resistant readings* of the 'youth of Asian origin' (discussed shortly) it also illustrates the ability of audiences to challenge media messages (as referred to on pg 48).

As has been emphasised at various points in this thesis (through Parts Four and Five) these dominant readings need to be seen within biographical contexts that to a large extent reflect experiences based on 'naturally' belonging to a historically dominant white majority and worldview. Having said this, individual ambivalences and instances of

exclusion emerge that serve to challenge the homogeneity and desirability of whiteness (see pgs 34 - 35 for theoretical discussion on this area). For instance, to recall *Charlene's* narrative, her 'white skin' is presented as a source of abjection due to the barrier it creates in terms of her being able to truly identify with the racialized experiences of her Black friends (pg 220). However, despite the overt challenge to the desirability of whiteness seen in such instances, its placing as the dominant norm remains unaltered. In the main, 'white ethnicity' although not necessarily presented as homogenous through the narratives (e.g. hierarchies of 'whiteness' that place 'European whiteness' such as Italians in terms of the exotic Other, see pg 240) does emerge as largely 'invisible' and 'normal'. Therefore, Otherness can be flirted with on the basis of a nationalistic 'right' which as I have illustrated in this thesis emanates from a predominantly 'white male' position that is linked to a masculinist discourse of authentic/inauthentic belonging to Britain. Here authentic belonging comes to be articulated primarily in terms of ancestral origins located in Britain (e.g. see pg 236). I have also illustrated, primarily through 'white female' positions, how Otherness can be taken on / experimented with as a 'desire' for exoticness symbolized through something as seemingly frivolous as a mehndi/henna tattoo (e.g. see pg 233). Crucially the taking on of the symbols of 'Asian Otherness' need not mean and does not mean, in any significant manner, a displacement of hegemonic existences or world views (as has been highlighted on pg 153). Further, it does not in the main translate into a reflection on that existence and the lived existences of those Othered people, a finding that has been noted elsewhere (e.g. Gilroy, 1993a in relation to African-Caribbean peoples/culture). In the context of the present study, these Othered people include 'British Asians' who are 'familiar' (through associations of long term friendship, work colleagues etc) but nevertheless are consistently marked as 'strangers' through their 'race' and culture. This is reflected in several of the narratives of 'white youth' who had all experienced (to greater/lesser extent) some interaction with 'Asian people' (e.g. university friends) and/or 'Asian culture' (e.g. Asian club nights). However, discussion of Asian friends, for instance, was

primarily in terms of their cultural difference that became articulated in terms of popular cultural traits (e.g. overprotective families; openness as contrast to 'stiff British upper lip') or collapsed into desirable cultural products (e.g. Asian dress). Through these narratives, even the British Asians that were known personally to 'the white youth' are stripped of their humanness and represented in objectifying ways (e.g. see pg 235). Moreover, 'mainstream' representations and knowledge of / about Asianness supersedes information gained through personal interactions. For instance, in relation to the majority of 'white women' advice from mainstream magazines about 'Asian style' and where best to purchase this is favoured above that gained from their Asian friends. These magazines provide a means to 'take on' difference through an 'adapting' of Asian dress that can be used to enhance the dominant Self but need not change it (e.g. see pg 244).

What is particularly significant within this discussion is that Othering processes are carried out not in terms of some distant, unknown 'difference' but rather in a context where there is regular interaction with 'Asian people'. Here then, 'British Asians' can be seen as constituting 'familiar strangers' (as referred to on pgs 46-47) however their racialized difference ensures their occupancy of sites of 'the strange' that consistently overshadows sites of 'the familiar'. However, as has already been highlighted at various points in this thesis in terms of the detachment of cultural products from origins, bodies and lives, the taking on of 'difference' and 'exotica' cannot be seen as intended to alter hegemonic relations. Rather the success of commodity capitalism depends on maintaining them through a 'mythical' (see pg 126 with reference to Barthes) cultural construction.

Findings from the biographical interviews point to the 'youth of Asian origin' also involved in the promotion of essentialist binaries. This is articulated primarily in terms of their 'difference from white people' and protectiveness around 'Asian culture' and identity. These feelings emerge strongly in *Akshay's* narrative for instance, that is centred on a position of

defence against attacks on his cultural identity since childhood. He therefore expresses feeling 'truly comfortable' only in the company of other Asians and sees the proliferation of Asian culture as having no bearing on altering the racialized position of Asians in Britain. Rather, as was particularly noted amongst some of the men in particular (across ethnicity) the promotion of Asian culture is intrinsically linked to capitalist motivations (see pg 251). In addition, certain responses to visual discourses have also demonstrated orientalist practices emerging from this so called orientalized group (see pg 210). However, the motivations behind these processes need to be recognized in specific terms that emanate from occupying a historically marginal position vis a vis 'whiteness', where 'dominant regimes' have exerted the power to make them see and experience themselves as Other (Hall,2000). What emerges is an emphasis on contradictory feelings emanating from awareness of their country of origin/ancestors being subjugated through British colonial rule and then being born and brought up in the subjugating country (e.g. see pg 227). This is coupled with personal experiences of racisms at individual (racial abuse) institutional (school / employment) and cultural levels (stereotypical assumptions) within a general awareness of racially orientated superior/inferior dictums, for instance, 'white over black' and 'West over East'.

Therefore, as a means of self-preservation and empowerment, the 'youth of Asian origin' have largely sought to retreat 'within' on the basis of 'race' and culture. In other words, what is presented through these narrations is that acceptance, self-worth and safety exist on the basis of 'non-white alliances' and in particular alliances within Asian communities (e.g. see pg 224). This finding reflects those of other studies that have highlighted feelings of safeness amongst Asian youth existing within specific ethnic minority spaces (see reference to Westwood, 1995 pg 58). However, as has been highlighted through discussion of the youth narratives, lived realities do not fall into such easy alignments and significant issues emerge that point to a commonality based on both youth experiences and human experiences. This is illustrated through *Anil's* narrative for

instance that emphasises his expectation of a natural commonality with other Asians that has been challenged through his love for his white English fiancée, *Kathy* (see pg 225). His narration points to the importance of human traits such as personality, character, intelligence etc that are stamped out through focusing on an essentialist view of difference. However, the crucial point that emerges through these narratives is the continued familiar forms of racial exclusion that are cited by these young Asians born in Britain, some six decades since mass immigration. These fuel the need to present an 'us v them' polarity that is seeped within the knowledge of historically constructed inequality and experiences of colour and cultural racisms (this substantiates the discussions of Part One).

It is within this context that *oppositional readings* (largely couched within a defensiveness of 'Asian culture' and again despite attention to overlapping of reading categories) to the preferred meaning contained within the 'mainstream' magazine discourses largely resonates in the responses of the 'youth of Asian origin'. It is in these orientalist constructions that the 'youth of Asian origin' read an underlying confirmation of their engrained exclusion from Britain and Britishness. I have highlighted the manner in which 'mainstream' magazine discourses implicitly place Asianness as mutually exclusive to Britishness (e.g. see pg 186) coupled with stereotypical and inferiorising representations of Asia / Asian culture (e.g. see pgs 160-165). These ideological meanings intersect with personal experiences/awareness of historical and contemporary racisms in British society and the West in general. This serves to influence the disassociation of Britishness as part of their lived and in particular, emotional identity. I have drawn attention to the identity positionings of the majority of 'youth of Asian origin' in terms of 'Asian' and/or 'Indian' and their discursive alignment with their country of origin, despite in most cases never having been there. In the minority of cases where a 'British Asian' positioning is presented this is in practical terms that seek to assert birth/citizenship rights as opposed to emotional belonging (see pg 216). On this issue, I have also noted the importance

placed on asserting a national/ethnic identity amongst the narratives of the 'youth of Asian origin' that does not arise in the majority of narratives of the 'white youth' (see pg 217). The latter may reflect the 'normality' historically associated with whiteness that does not need to be asserted and illustrates the differential needs arising from minority and majority positionings.

It is these racialized experiences and positionings that make the constructions of 'race' and culture so tangible, inspite of the ambivalences and contradictions associated with them (as discussed in Chapter 1). 'Race', heavily accented on skin colour maintains its longstanding pervasiveness through symbolising 'some thing' natural to belong to that imparts a sense of (however illusionary) 'sameness' and 'solidarity'. As has been highlighted through the course of this discussion, this was articulated differently amongst the youths, with 'white youth' to a large extent reflecting the unmarked character of 'race' and white skin colour. However, implicitly, their narratives centred on a 'sameness to' that was linked to whiteness and a 'difference from' that was linked to non-whiteness. In contrast 'race' and being 'visibly different' forms an overt theme of the majority of narratives of the 'youth of Asian origin'. This translated to expectations of 'solidarity' amongst those of an 'Asian/non-white race' in the face of minority positionings in Britain and the West in general.

Similarly, 'Culture', largely coded in racial terms, is universally constructed across ethnic and gender divisions as a popular culture of aesthetic products. However, it is 'Asian culture' / ethnic minority cultures that are universally (across ethnicity and gender) constructed and perceived at the level of visibility and objectification. On the other hand 'white culture' portrayed in terms that align Western with British and British with English largely retains a hegemonic invisibility. The latter point echoes findings of the Parekh Report (2000) on multi cultural Britain. I have illustrated how this normalised position enables the selective and strategic promotion / taking on of exotic difference through 'culture'. On

this basis 'culture' and 'cultural identity' for the youth of Asian origin constitute 'objects' to be preserved. This serves to challenge the view of culture/cultural identity as necessarily unfixed and fluid (see pg 38). Rather, culture is utilized as 'some thing' to be kept close to the marginalized self and sheltered from majority capture and colonisation. Here the proliferation of 'Asian culture' in and by Western culture does not translate into a hybrid 'third space' of empowerment or even acceptance.

In the light of historically dominant Eurocentric modes of representation, a call to self-represent is often heralded as a step forward and is something that Said's Orientalism (1978) urges for as a means of dismantling orientalist practices. While the very act of self-representation in itself constitutes a challenge to an orientalist hegemonic power that serves to speak for 'the sub altern', general limitations of this idea in practice have been discussed in this thesis (e.g. see pg 81). In addition what has been noted are the ambivalences and constraints within which processes of minority self-representation operate and encounter. Findings from interviews with 'British Asian' magazine producers have pointed to issues of limited resources, monopolization by mainstream publications and burdens linked to minority representation (e.g. see pgs 48 ; 205). Further, my analysis of 'British Asian' magazine discourses has highlighted the merging of several positions at any one time that reflect both cultural responsibility and cultural marginality. Thus in many ways mirroring the 'mainstream' messages, there are discourses promoting cultural fusion while emphasising binary positions. For instance, overtly bringing 'East' and 'West' together yet discursively constructing the two as separate through fixing essentialist traits to each, such as traditionalism with the East and modernity with the West (e.g. see pgs 192 -194). In addition, there are challenges to stereotypical portrayals while reinforcing fixed, orientalist images that could be said to represent a 'self-orientalism' or 'autoexoticization'. For instance, I have highlighted images that seek to challenge orientalist assumptions of the 'passive' Asian / Oriental woman however within the same image certain signs could be interpreted as

reproducing other orientalist traits, such as the 'dangerously exotic' Asian/ Oriental woman (see pgs 175-179).

A discussion of both the subversive and self-debilitating effects of self-orientalism has been undertaken elsewhere in this thesis and at various points I have attempted to problematise the concept (e.g. see pgs 80 ;154). I would now like to reflect further on the internal contradiction that is posed by notions of self-orientalism amidst the arena of cultural representation. Firstly, it needs to be stressed that the very idea of self-orientalism emerges through and because of the hegemonic practice of orientalism. In other words, through sustained imperial projects, orientalist ideological structures were propounded. To a large extent then it is inevitable that through the historical construction of an unequal power dynamic, orientalization of people, places and cultures will also emerge in self-representation projects. This may be in terms of an affirmation of hegemonically defined cultural traits that reduces constructions to essences and popular perceptions. For instance, in relation to the British Asian magazine discourses, the 'natural' association of Asian/Asian culture with traditionalism (pg 192) arranged marriages (pg 200) or the orientalist representation of 'other' Asian cultures (pg 208). Paradoxically a self-orientalism may also translate in discourse that seeks to challenge orientalist tropes, for instance, in highlighting and countering hegemonic 'truths' associated with the British Raj (pg 206). This is because through a self-presentation that is constructed primarily in terms of a challenge to a dominant discourse, the centrality of that discourse is preserved through the pivotal attribute this very act gives it.

While this may be a necessary limitation involved in countering orientalist discourses, it is important to draw out the frames of reference that are involved in viewing (for instance) the 'importance of family/community' as a 'trait' of Asian culture that is part of Asian tradition and this very act as one of self-orientalism. In other words, if 'spirituality', 'traditionalism' etc have been popularly identified through a historically hegemonic orientalism as symbols of Asian and/or Eastern exoticness and inferiority,

does that mean to self identify these as aspects of 'Asian culture' becomes self-orientalism? It is my view that to do so is problematic as it takes away agency from the subject constructed as 'subaltern' who may, especially in a disaporic context find comfort in 'traditional' aspects of his/her culture associated with origin. This can be seen in the narratives of many of the 'youth of Asian origin' who sought recourse in promoting the 'spirituality' of 'Asian culture' as a means of empowerment and elevation from hegemonic culture (see pg 238). However if asserting these aspects simply becomes a marker of autoexoticization then through attributing sustained credibility and power to hegemonic labelling frames, there is a danger of merely consolidating their dominance. The importance of the intertwined role of knowledge, language and power in cultural constructions has been cited at various points in this thesis (e.g. see pg 78) and becomes no more apparent than in the current discussion. In my view there is a need to problematize or even dispense of designations such as 'self orientalism' and 'autoexoticization' through challenging the hegemonic meaning and negative connotations associated with language terms, such as 'tradition'. Rather, attempts can be made at putting forward alternative conceptions and knowledges that do not necessarily exist according to orientalist dictates. Therefore, to promote the 'spirituality' of 'Asian culture' does not have to be seen in negative and inferiorizing terms. However, problems occur when labels come to be pitted against each other as one dimensional essences of identity in order to illustrate a superior-inferior dynamic or an immutable 'difference' between peoples and cultures. This has been and continues to be a prominent characteristic of socio-economic relations between British white majority and British Asian minority, as illustrated through this thesis. Therefore, the representation of India/the East as 'traditional', 'spiritual' becomes problematic in both 'mainstream' and 'minority' discourses because it is drawn in fixed, one-dimensional terms that serve to emphasise a naturalized difference between peoples, cultures and places. Significantly it is such constructions that by preserving essentialist conceptions of 'difference' puncture the possibility of relations that may not only be based on, for instance, a negotiation of Britishness and

Asianness but commonalities that may emerge from other human experiences and traits. For instance, those based on family (e.g. see pg 262) locality, leisure pursuits and (to recall pg 285) character, personality and love. Perhaps through micro efforts that aim to challenge accepted meaning and knowledge lies the potential to subvert hegemonic, orientalist dictates. Here I am referring to interpersonal dialogues between individuals and groups that serve to deconstruct what silently passes by as 'normal' and 'truth' through everyday discussion and debate. However, it is my view that labels such as 'self-orientalism' and 'autoexoticization' are ultimately regressive as they can act to condemn and patronize the cultural minority subject into a sense of shame in aspects that may be felt as a source of pride and empowerment. This serves to reproduce dominant frames of reference that determine a universal ascription.

In light of the above discussion, what emerges is a maze of burdens relating to 'truth', authenticity and visibility through which Asian magazine producers are trying to conduct minority cultural projects. These involve countering Asian invisibility and challenging racialised portrayals while attempting to objectively portray 'Asian culture' for and through the negotiated identity positionings of the Asian diaspora. Crucially, while a focus on 'visibility' and self representation are seen to hold the key for British Asian cultural producers (e.g. see pg 249) this falls short of the expectations of British Asian cultural consumers. The importance of 'being seen' is not disputed here within a long standing context of Asian invisibility, especially in the popular culture arena, as has been noted earlier (see pg 150). However, what is highlighted through the biographies of the 'youth of Asian origin' is the inadequacy of 'being made visible' when this visibility largely remains trapped within a stereotypical and inferior mould that doesn't reflect what they experience as a lived reality. For instance,' the strict Asian family' is a trope that is automatically assigned to them that in practice they may be alienated from (e.g. see pg 201). The consistent reproduction of these tropes in hegemonic and minority representations has the effect of reinforcing the alienation of the

'youth of Asian origin' from the 'British mainstream' coupled with their dissatisfaction in self-representation projects. Conversely, the particular authenticity attributed to minority representations of 'Asian culture' by the 'white youth' serves to reinforce stereotypical images of, for instance the 'Asian family' (e.g. see pg 247).

On this issue, I have highlighted a further limitation that centres on the different positionalities within Asian self-representation. For instance, in relation to popular culture, those self-representation projects that assume visibility and importance have tended to emerge from the same selective source (e.g. Meera Sayal, see pg 5). Moreover, the increasing success of these projects has meant their co-option into the mainstream to a large extent which serves to question the extent to which this can be viewed as effective self- representation. In other words, the fact that certain British Asian directors, actors etc are visible in the mainstream and are involved in the production of programmes that are welcomed by and in many ways constructed for a mainstream audience (e.g. *Kumars at no.42* see pg 5) may limit the radical potential of such projects. Therefore to ensure continued survival and success, a formulaic representation of 'Asian culture' may be promoted that panders to hegemonic perceptions. Hence the image of the one-dimensional 'Asian family' time and time again in 'these self-representation' projects (e.g. *East is East; Bajhi on the Beach; Bend it like Beckham; Kumars at No.42*). This reflects the problematic involved in assuming homogeneity within minority cultures while glossing over who in effect is representing the community and within which constraints and contexts. While the existence of self-representation in itself as a means for empowerment is acknowledged, I have also attempted to draw attention to the limitations involved in *necessarily assuming* it to be an effective challenge to hegemonic world views.

Beyond the Impasse

It is disheartening that in the millennium era, amidst a proliferation of 'Asian culture' in various realms of life, seen to symbolize at last a

'welcome to the fold' banner, the core findings of this study points to minimal progress towards racial and cultural union, let alone, equality. Rather, a salient finding is the binary positionings of youths aligned along racial/cultural lines that is reinforced through (to greater/lesser extent) mainstream and minority media representations. What emerges is a gridlock that in effect does not bring us that much further on from age-old debates of assimilation and integration. In other words, at the most pessimistic, if the parameters of representation and perception of racially Other/ed peoples and Other/ed cultures are defined by a historically dominant whiteness, is there any benefit to the identity positionings of ethnic minority groups in highlighting 'difference' at all? Although evidence from this study would suggest not, as an optimistic rebuttal, I would now like to explore various issues and express personal suggestions for moving towards a greater togetherness.

Firstly, the intrinsic relationship of the Other to the Self has been acknowledged and in terms of Levinisian thought which claims the Other does not necessarily have to submit to the Self is seen as a means of empowering the Other (see pg 45). However, to go further than this, it may not be necessary for conceptualizations of Self and Other to be fixed according to conventional or dominant standards. Therefore, the Self may not always have to be configured as 'white Western' and in some instances may be conceptualized as 'Asian'. In other words, if the representation of 'Asian culture' and therefore 'difference' is largely dictated through a hegemonic frame, the 'Asian Self' in terms of the lived body divorced from the projected image, need not view itself within this dominant image and can reject it. This may be possible through the deconstruction of orientalist images within the knowledge of historically constructed positionalities that naturalize white/West as 'Self' and Asian/East as 'Other' and therefore 'Asian difference' as exotic and inferior. Many of the 'youths of Asian origin' demonstrated challenges to hegemonic portrayals of Asianness through awareness of historical racisms and experience of contemporary racisms. These knowledges coupled with pride in their identification as 'Asian' and/or 'Indian' enabled

them to question and reject the dominant ideology they were confronted with. Although this process in itself makes minimal inroads into enabling disparate groups to 'come together', some control is attributed to the Self that has been rendered as Other through the highlighting (in whatever terms) of difference.

In addition, where the spotlight is put on 'Asian culture' in the hegemonic arena (albeit negatively) Asians, by virtue of an ethnicity that may exclude them from Britishness at any time, here may take on the role of the 'authentic' Self and source of knowledge. In this conceptualization, 'white Englishness' becomes the outsider and 'the Other'. This serves to destabilize the naturalized association of white/Western with the centre; the Self and may cause the constructed nature of 'white power' to be reflected on by 'white people' themselves and therefore hegemonic positionalities challenged. Potential for this can be seen in the narratives of some of the 'white youth' (especially the women) that while implicitly placing whiteness in a position of normality/dominance did occasionally reflect on the effect of that dominance. This was articulated for instance, in terms of worries that white appropriations of Asian culture constituted 'stealing' (see pg 258) or through experiences of whiteness as minority, such as within black/Asian social circles (e.g. see pg 220).

However, what I have proposed above may be challenged by the view that the Self, which is/has been a colonizer can never be an Other, even from the point of view of colonized/formerly colonized Others due to the Other's construction as a deflection and consolidation of the imperialist Self (see Savigliano,1995; Spivak,1985). In addition, I have emphasised in this concluding discussion the endurance of orientalist knowledge residing within the arena of popular culture. I have also drawn attention to the pervasive force of media representations as sources of truth/knowledge to the extent where projections from these sources are valued above meaningful cultural interactions. Despite these concerns, it is my view that the awareness and knowledge of historically constructed power relations and orientalist ideological practices may provide an

avenue for questioning and varying hegemonic constructions of Self and Other through interpersonal dialogues and practices. There may be a potential for the airing of views between those that are pitted in opposition by virtue of their 'race' and culture, which is released even through the hegemonic representation of difference. This may then lead to alternative truths being heard and dominant conceptions being questioned, the potential for which I have emphasised in this discussion. Even if this occurs at the humblest level, surely it is still worth pursuing.

Of course this is not intended to imply that the 'real truth' about Asian culture for instance, necessarily resides with 'every Asian person' as this only serves to essentialize and homogenize. Further, it is not claimed that there is a 'real truth' at the outset or in Foucauldian terms, a 'truth' that can be accessed outside the realm of discourse and representation (see pg 133). However, it is through the surfacing of 'difference' that an avenue for discussion and challenge remain open. In my view, it is when differences are quashed completely and meshed into calls for 'assimilation' or even compartmentalized in the more pleasing, 'integration' that historically engrained ideologies are reproduced. My study can be seen as attempting to make use of the avenue of debate around trajectories of difference and representation that the proliferation of 'Asian culture' in the West has engendered.

Secondly, aside from formulations of Self and Other that are intrinsic to conceptualizations of difference and representation, what is highlighted through this thesis are differences based on what is instantly 'seen'. I have emphasised in this concluding discussion how colour of skin, despite being problematic (see pgs 33-36) retains its historically pervasive influence as a marker of superiority-inferiority. This can be seen through the invisible, 'normal' nature of whiteness that is presented in the majority of narratives (across ethnicity) and the highly marked nature of Asianness/non whiteness that emerges through all the narratives (across ethnicity). Therefore because of hegemonic views/practices, even if the denial or assimilation of difference is seen to

be a more satisfactory option to the inferiorizing representation of difference, the marking of difference and exclusion may be retained at the level of the skin, i.e. what is 'visibly different' from the norm. I recall here, the views that emerged amongst the majority of the 'youths of Asian origin' who pointed to their 'non-white skin colour' as a salient reason why they did not feel nor were made to feel that they belonged in Britain (e.g. see pg 220). However, a colour hierarchy that privileges fair skin was also noted through the British Asian visual discourses (see pg 172) and narratives (see pg 221) that again reflects heterogeneous positions and exclusions within marginality. Therefore, despite the fact that the 'value' attributed to 'race' and skin colour is historically and socially constructed, the 'real' impact it has on people's lives, especially those that are 'visibly different' means that this marking of difference cannot be denied.

From what has been discussed then, there emerges, as is by now widely acknowledged, a need for the promotion or at least recognition of 'difference'. However in my view, what needs to be altered is the manner in which this difference is formulated so that 'difference' *in itself* can be acknowledged. This seeks to challenge opposing notions of Self and Other where 'difference from' and 'difference to' are focused upon within historically prevailing relations of power. This may be seen as unrealistic in view of what has been discussed earlier in this thesis (e.g. see pgs 45;125) in that identities are formulated within a 'difference from' dynamic, as illustrated through Orientalism (1978). In addition, findings that have emerged from this study have highlighted historically engrained ideologies and practices (at institutional, cultural and personal levels) that construct 'whiteness' at the level of normality and superiority. This is universally (e.g. through mainstream and minority discourses) juxtaposed against and presented as mutually exclusive to 'non-whiteness' or Asianness. However, it is my view that through micro-processes such as interpersonal dialogues, as highlighted earlier a more objective conceptualization of difference may be realized.

However, while the subjective is valued, there can be no dispute that it is in macro, institutional structures that the power to dictate and alter hegemonic constructions of differences that matter, ultimately lies. It is my view then that it is necessary to engage in the exchange of dialogues/experiences at the earliest age when minds and hearts are perhaps most open, in family and school settings. This would require firstly, a challenge or at least questioning of institutional biases of, for example, Eurocentric based education and teaching methods. For instance, emphasis needs to be placed on the inclusion of 'world history' that incorporates visual discourses from global sources as opposed to an account of history that resides within restricted Western spaces and viewpoints. It is my view that texts such as Orientalism (1978) The Black Athena (1987) The Black Atlantic (1993b) that highlight the constructed character of places, peoples and cultures need to be included as core texts in school curriculums as opposed to being sought out later in life by selective university students. By their inclusion, I do not mean they should be presented as 'the real truth' but made readily available as part of a varied knowledge base that serves to decentre Eurocentric hegemony. This is considered particularly important within the current climate of globalisation, where the scale of encounters between heterogeneous peoples and cultures can only escalate. It is also considered necessary in terms of truly reflecting a multicultural society where the historical context of young 'British Asians' (just one group of numerous minorities) is attributed not just visibility but respect and objectivity. I am referring here, for instance, to a balanced account of colonial/neocolonial projects that not only promotes the 'Golden Age of Empire' (which is all that I was taught at school) but highlights the detrimental impact of these practices to an audience of children from a range of ethnic backgrounds. In addition, there could be a greater emphasis on school trips that encourage family outings to racially and culturally marked areas (e.g. Southall, Brick Lane, Brixton). This is meant not in terms of 'tours of blackness' but as a means to avoid recourse to one dimensional representations from afar while increasing the retail value of such spaces. In addition, there could be screenings of 'foreign' films in class settings

that cultivates a global outlook to media representations. Crucially, I am not proposing that such initiatives be pursued under a banner of 'multicultural' or 'anti racist' education but simply as 'education'. It may be utopian to assume that these practices could automatically result in 'unlearning the inherent dominative mode' and earlier in this thesis I have problematised the area of 'knowledge' in general (see pg 81). However they may go some way in carving out the means for different peoples and cultures to be valued within an acknowledgement of unequal historical power relations and hegemonic constructions. Further, this may enable some opportunity for bridging absolute cultural divides and provide space for questioning hegemonic representations of peoples and places. In addition, this may help to foster a sense of emotional belonging to Britain amongst those that have historically been racialized which may have some affect on limiting the numbers of potentially disaffected 'youth of Asian origin' (highlighted on pgs 58-59).

Secondly, it may be in the complicated spaces of the metropolis that houses, segregates and commodifies 'culture' for global consumption that some possibility for these dialogues and inclusions already lies. As I have discussed (see pgs 267-269) this emerges through the youth narratives largely on two levels, firstly: the ethnic minority areas of London in general or Asian areas in particular (e.g. Southall). It is paradoxically through these 'separated spaces' that a sense of inclusion is fostered, not in terms of *inclusion into mainstream society* but on the basis of self worth and capability. The racialised socio-economic context that produced these separated spaces at the outset also needs to be acknowledged (as highlighted in Chapter 2). These are important factors that provide an alternative view to these spaces as threatening 'racial/religious ghettos' that prevent integration to Britain (as identified by Trevor Phillips, Head of Commission for Racial Equality / BBC.CO.UK 18 September 2005). However, the marking out of 'separate spaces' needs to be seen as a form of continued exclusion from both hegemonic culture and resources.

This limitation is addressed to an extent through the second level of inclusion that emerges through the youth narratives. Here, Central London is viewed as a space where both processes of interaction and inclusion may be facilitated. The former is largely highlighted in terms of the narratives of the 'white youth' who highlight aspects of the metropolis as fostering a high level of interaction with a variety of peoples and cultures. For the 'youth of Asian origin', the 'placing' of Asian culture in terms of club nights, restaurants etc *within* the central metropolis comes to be identified in terms of acceptance and inclusion to an extent. I have noted how this contrasts with the negative responses of the 'youth of Asian origin' to the location of 'Asian culture' in the hegemonic space of mainstream magazines. This may be linked to a fixed and narrow form of mainstream representation that is perceived in terms of discourses that are rooted in a racialized consumerism. Alternatively, the existence of 'Asian culture' within the dynamic and fluid space of the metropolis, where dialogue and bodies actively meet, may be viewed as less restrictive. However, I have highlighted that the existence of 'minority cultures' even within the central metropolis is often in terms of segregated spaces (e.g. 'China Town' in Soho). These spaces offer a restricted 'taste' of Othered cultures as 'exotica' that fall in line with hegemonic representations and serve as 'knowledge' of those cultures. Therefore while potential exists here for interpersonal exchanges, the dynamism of the metropolis that houses 'different cultures' must be seen as rooted within processes of commodification that enable Othered cultures to be sampled amidst an invisible background of hegemonic culture.

In light of the findings to emerge from this thesis, perhaps the most realistic challenge to orientalism does not lie within a denial of difference, nor a whitewashed representation of difference, nor through a necessarily restricted self-representation. Rather, it may be realized within interpersonal dialogues, debates and encounters that are enabled through more objective educational experiences and within cosmopolitan

urban settings. I am not proposing that the importance of 'race' and culture as a constructing principle in young people's lives be denied. Nor am I claiming that it is realistic to go beyond these social constructions towards a harmonious urban 'convivial culture' or a 'new ethnicity' that claims to have moved away from identities and alliances hinged on 'race' and experiences of racisms. The findings from this study coupled with my own experiences as a British Asian point to the expectation of this as not only unrealistic but not necessarily desirable. What I am suggesting is not a denial of essentialist based differences but an illumination of them. In other words through a spotlight on 'race' and racisms in terms of learning about the historically constructed character of relational positionalities there is a possibility to deconstruct them. This process may enable identifications that while acknowledging 'difference' may not necessarily or always be bounded by them along essentialist lines. Subsequently, there may also be room for identifications and experiences on the very basic level of humanity where alliances can also be made in terms of: common interests, personality and character. It is hoped that this may also enable alignments to be made in relation to specific issues and contexts that the individual is concerned with that may relate to those of a particular skin colour, culture etc but not necessarily so. In this way, historically hegemonic frames of representation, while not being erased or even changed, can be put under question so that cultural differences contextualised within socio-economic origins can be acknowledged and valued.

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APPENDIX

Appendix 1: Biographical Interviewee Profiles

Appendix 2: Biographical Interview Transcipt ('Asian cultural consumer')

Appendix 3: Semi-Structured Interview Transcript ('mainstream cultural producer')

Appendix 1

Biographical Interviewee Profiles (Alphabetical Order)

Name (Psuedynom)	*Age*	*Sex*	*Country of Origin*	*Occupation*
Akshay	30	Male	India	Accountant (self employed)
Andrew	28	Male	England	Publishing Executive
Anil	26	Male	India	Teacher
Anjie	28	Female	England	IT Recruitment Officer
Ayesha	19	Female	Pakistan	Beauty Therapist
Carla	30	Female	England	Lawyer
Charlene	20	Female	England	Bar Worker
Daniel	18	Male	England	DJ
David	25	Male	England	Civil Servant
Jameel	29	Male	Pakistan	Fitness Instructor
Julia	18	Female	England	Hairdresser
Julian	21	Male	England	Student (MA)
Kathleen	24	Female	England	Student (MA)
Mia	27	Female	India	Teacher
Rajesh	19	Male	India	Student (On gap year)
Raveena	30	Female	India	Marketing Manager
Riza	25	Female	Pakistan	Fashion Designer
Salman	24	Male	India	Property Developer
Sam	18	Male	England	Electrician
Shalini	20	Female	India	Student (BA)

Appendix 2

Biographical Interview: Mia (14M) female, 27yrs, Indian

(informal conversation takes place between us for approx 30 mins before narration begins at the point when M starts talking about the Asian cultural forum she is a regular member of)

M It's important to have these sorts of things readily available when you are in a minority you know (pause) what I mean is places where you can get authentic information about your culture, do you know what I mean?

N Yeah...I do, feel free to go on

M Yep its like its a strong need in me to find out as much as I can about where I'm from, where I originate from and obviously you talk to your parents and older generations or read books but places like the Asian websites are really good because they have bits on history and things about Asian culture, all sorts of things like the music, food, clothes, bollywood plus you get informed about what Asian events, ummm family festivals although to be honest, its not that I know everything about them, like the exact purpose of each function, but its part of my culture, something that I was born into and I've been brought up with, so its mine and places like this are really helpful in adding to what's naturally there, teaching you things you don't know about and you can just browse around in your own home and find out so much (pause)

N sounds interesting

M its like an information point, an Asian one stop shop but what I really like are the discussion sections, you know like forums where you can put your point of view across and discuss issues with other people (pause) my husband doesn't really understand and sees it as pointless but we're different like that, he's really laid back and just swims with the tide you know and accepts things the way they are but I'm always asking questions, trying to find out stuff but he doesn't understand the point of logging on and discussing issues of the day, as he calls it (laughs) with people you don't know from Adam...I suppose it does sound silly now I'm saying it out loud to you (stops)

N not at all, I'm the same, always wanting to know things, that's why I'm doing this (laughs)

M (laughs) yep, I suppose, guess I'm talking to the right person then (pause) so yep in a way I'd rather log on and talk about things with people I don't know because you know family is family, friends are friends so you kind of know them and what they think about things so in a way its much more interesting to discuss

and debate with people you don't know and find out how they feel about things (pause) its not always light hearted though, I mean sometimes it is, like there will be discussions about Indian films, actors and actresses or favourite songs and stuff which I really enjoy because I am an Indian film addict but other times, its more serious, like people will talk about their personal experiences right from school to work and it can be pretty bad, there's been things that I've been really shocked by you know (pause) there was a discussion a while back now on growing up in Britain and most of the people that were sending in their views had horrible stories to tell about being beaten up at school and hounded daily because of the colour of the skin (pause) but then again, I don't know why it surprises me because I think we've all had something like that, have you, if you don't mind me asking?

N No, no, go ahead, personally speaking, I feel lucky that I've never experienced anything physical to me or been hounded as you say but in terms of nasty comments or looks, then yes...

M (interrupts) Yep that's like with me and alot of my female Asian friends, it stays more at a certain level, dirty looks or snide comments that make digs at your culture or assume things about your culture but I think its guys that get it much worse, I don't know why but alot of my Asian male friends have had blatant racial abuse and some have been attacked and most of the people who were talking about really bad experiences when they were at school were men and it just makes me sick but you know, these people are all my sort of age so we're talking about at least fifteen years back and maybe things aren't that bad now, things look different now, don't they? (stops)

N How do you mean?

M Well , its a different climate I think in the sense that there's more going on for us you know like with all the Indian fashions everywhere and the big deal that's made of bollywood and all that (pause) I don't like it but its different than what used to be the case, its like Asians were always there but not there if you see what I mean and now we are around at least for people to see and take notice of even if they don't really see us at all (pause) am I making any sense, I don't think I am

N You are to me, feel free to carry on, you were saying they don't really see us at all

M Yep, I'll tell you what I mean, its like at the school where I teach, I've been there for around two years and its great, I love my job, the kids and most of my colleagues are lovely but there's this woman who has had a problem with me

since I started there like she'll either completely ignore me when she passes in the corridor as in she looks completely through me and you know things like, if the only seat that's free in the staff room is next to me, she won't sit there, not that I'm in the staff room much but its happened a few times now and then I've seen her whispering to other colleagues and its blatantly about me but you know, I'm not saying it really bothered me and its obvious she's got a problem with me because I'm Asian, even though there are a number of black teachers there who she talks to so it has to be that really(pause)or that I look alot better than she does (laughs) actually maybe its both those things, its bad enough when they see an Asian on the same level as them, let alone on a higher level and then when that Asian person isn't your meek stereotype, they really can't handle it. Anyway, the reason why I brought her up is because this is what she's like ok but then one day, about 6 months ago she came up to speak to me and it was no normal, hello, how are you type of question but to ask me what the difference between a sari and shalwar kameez was because her daughter was really interested in Ethnic fashion, that's what she called it and she wanted to get her something for her birthday (laughs) I have to tell you I was completely gobsmacked at the audacity of this woman, who hasn't spoken to me for two odd years and then out of the blue comes to ask my advice and ok I know about this, its my culture and I told her, infact I was happy to tell her but what I'm trying to say is that firstly, she assumed that I would know this but more what I mean is that to her, this is all I was worth talking about and how I could help her. She didn't say anything else to me and hasn't spoken to me since. Do you see what I'm saying, its like alot of white people are fine about trying Indian or Chinese food, or getting into whatever's trendy but they don't want to know you or they want to know you just through your culture, as if that's all there is to you. Yes, my culture is very important to me, I'm proud to be Indian, Asian that's my race, that's what I am and I want to talk about it but not everything I do in life necessarily boils down to that. Its like when I go to Tesco's, I'm just going there to do my weekly shop, just like the next person and I'll be buying the same things the English woman next to me is buying, being Indian doesn't mean I'm automatically programmed to buy and eat something different to her (laughs) ok I'm exaggerating but I'm sure you know what I mean being Asian and what people expect of you because of this (pause) like even my really good friends who are English that I've known since uni, actually college, some of them, when I first started seeing Rahul the most common thing I was asked wasn't the normal questions you'd get from your friends like, 'what's he like, what does he look like?' you know that kind of stuff, it was 'oh, was it arranged?' and you know these are people I've known for years, who've been round my house, know me and my family really well yet this is the first thing they came up with. You know, I just had to say that not all Asians have arranged marriages, I know that's what you see on the tv and read about but it doesn't happen with all of us and in any case, what you mean by arranged, as in forced is not how it really happens most of the time (pause) but its like different values attached to things isn't it, I was chatting with my Indian friends about this quite recently actually and its like Western things like blind dates..I mean they even had a programme on it (laughs) and speed dating are fine but getting introduced to someone through your family, its got this big stigma attached to it, why because its a conventionally Eastern thing, you know I don't see that there's a big difference between getting introduced to someone through your friends in a club or through your family, as long as the aim is to introduce

and meet new people, which in the case of people I've known who have met people that way is how they met, through an introduction, that's all and then the dating bit starts, so where's the difference (pause) try telling a white person this though and they just nod, like they just don't believe you and feel sorry for you for having to cover up things like this, its ridiculous (pause)oh dear, I think I'm on a rant now, sorry I must sound awful (stops)

N Please don't apologise, I'm here to listen to your views and I can identify with alot of what you're saying

M Yeah, that's probably why I feel its ok to rant (laughs) you see that's the thing, I think, actually I know that alot of Asians feel the same way and that's why you kind of end up moving towards people who you don't have to explain yourself too because it gets so frustrating after a while because you just want to be seen as you, Mia, that's it (pause) and that's what I've gone round the houses trying to say is that its a different climate now but its still really the same you know, just because Asian things are everywhere at the moment, doesn't really change things for the better, I don't think because at the end of the day for a white person to buy a sari or shalwar kameez is not going to make them stop and think for a moment about where that came from or think about the people who normally wear it, you know what I mean. I love saris, they are so beautiful, I feel I should wear them more because they are part of me, its part of my authentic identity but I'm being totally honest in saying that on a day to day level I hardly ever wear Indian clothes, actually never, I only wear them really to weddings(pause)I feel really bad about that (stops)

N why's that?

M ummm don't know, its difficult to explain

N what do you feel?

M (pause) I love wearing saris and bindis...I feel I should wear them more often but practically its abit difficult when you're not used to it, well its not that difficult I suppose, plenty of women do but I suppose for our generation, we've grown up in Britain so feel comfortable wearing Western clothes but I think about these things a lot and I do think sometimes that its really sad that I only wear my Indian outfits at weddings, especially when you see white women wearing saris at Indian weddings which they've made a real effort to do and its nice, respectful but it makes me feel bad because the Indian clothes are my roots which I'm proud of and I should be displaying that. Its like I feel guilty because I consider myself to be a clued up person about my identity, my origins, my culture, you know I go to Asian events, I watch Indian films, I'm always on these

online discussion things where I can easily spend hours discussing Asian culture (pause) and then for our honeymoon, I insisted we go to North India, which is where my parents come from and we ended up spending a month there travelling around and it was amazing to go home if you like, because ultimately that's home where no one is staring because you have a brown face, where people can get beaten up for the colour of their skin not being white, how can that feel like home even if it hasn't happened to you personally. As you can see from the flat we bought loads of lovely things back to decorate our home with because I wanted it to reflect our Indian identity (pause)like the pictures, the vases, the lamps and all those things over there in that corner

N It looks so nice

M Yep I love it, especially the lamps although my husband thinks its abit much but he leaves all this stuff to me which is good (laughs) but yep, I do all these things but I feel abit of a hypocrite because I don't really wear Indian clothes and also I can't cook Indian food, how bad is that (pause) and I keep meaning to try but it all seems so laborious, you know after a day's work to cook an Indian meal, I get tired just thinking about it (laughs) but then so many women do it don't they and its our food, I'm not saying that's all us Asians can eat, of course it isn't but I feel I should know how to cook certain dishes so I can pass them down to the next generation, other wise how many things will be left of our culture, the language is almost non existent now, in my circles anyway, the only time I hear Hindi is when I watch an Indian film or listen to some songs and even when I go home, mum and dad speak mainly English, even my gran does, how bizarre is that(pause)and the clothes, I see white girls wearing Indian styles more than Indians you know, like at my school we had an evening for the teenagers recently, a disco really and just looking round the room, and its a pretty mixed school, there was so many white girls with Indian things on, like bindis or bangles and carrying the little mirrored bags, you know but I'm being serious when I say that not one of the Asian girls was wearing anything like that, they all had their jeans on, it wasn't a cultural evening or anything but still it was interesting to observe and also I feel really bad to say this about my students, who are very dear to me and they are only about 14yrs old but I didn't really like to see the English girls in my Indian things, I must sound really bad now but I mean they looked lovely but I'm being honest it did make me feel abit funny you know, it was almost as if, what do they know about it all, I know it sounds irrational but when I see teenage white girls wearing bindis, it really gets to me and I think, you've got no right to wear it, it belongs to my people, my culture and what sense do they have about its tradition, its just a fashion accessory to them and the most ironic thing is that I hardly ever wear it myself. For work, its mainly a skirt and top and then the rest of the time, I'm in jeans, I guess again its the practical aspect of it all, saris are gorgeous and I do have some really nice ones but its abit of a hassle to try and get one on every morning when you're in a rush, but then again lots of women do and its totally easy for them and then also other Indian clothes are really easy to wear like shalwar kameez, so I don't know what it is, I guess its what you are used to and I suppose when we were younger, our parents were trying to fit in as much as they could and when I look at old

photos, my mum is wearing mainly Western clothes, its difficult I think, you feel that you should be wearing Indian clothes because its part of who you are and you are proud of that but then in practice, its not that easy on different levels, because you haven't grown up wearing those clothes everyday so it doesn't really feel normal to you to wear them, if I'm being honest and then also, you know that if you wear a full Indian outfit anywhere other than Tooting Broadway, you are going to get stared at, it doesn't matter how much Indian things are everywhere, things haven't changed that much (laughs). Actually come to think about it, even if you go to places like Tooting you hardly ever see people wearing Indian clothes, I mean yep the older generations but I rarely see any girls my age wearing Indian clothes and if you think about it that's really sad because again, as the generations go on, it'll be white people if anyone wearing our clothes more and more and getting called bohemian. Its weird, you get Indian girls trying to be more white, and I mean me as well when I say that, through wearing Western clothes, or light coloured contact lenses, highlighted hair and all that, its like my friend, she always wears a foundation that's about two shades lighter than she is (laughs) and I say to her, you are lovely and brown why are you trying to hard it. You know its ok for magazines to have pages and pages about choosing the right bronzer or applying the perfect fake tan but when you are naturally brown, its something to be ashamed of, its ridiculous isn't it and we just fall into that so easily, I mean how many Indian films do you see where the heroine is light skinned, it doesn't matter so much for men, but the women are always almost white aren't they. Watching Indian films, it would be easy to think that all the women in India are fair skinned because the heroines have always been almost white and yep there are light skinned Asians depending on region, I mean you are even lighter than me, but how can you explain the majority of heroines that have come from South India, where generally people are dark and they look so white on screen that we believe they really are that colour, how do they do that? the miracles of film making no doubt (laughs) but it gives out the wrong message I think in terms of value, don't you?

N how do you mean?

M well like white is the best and amongst Asian people, you do see that anyone whose light skinned is considered attractive even if a darker skinned person may actually be more attractive, because of the dark skin, its automatically considered a negative and I think what we see in our films just supports that idea which we see everywhere in the West anyway don't we and I feel embarrassed to admit that I'm glad I have light skin because you do get revered in a certain way within the community (pause) don't get me wrong I'm not saying that I want to be white, not at all, I'm glad I'm brown and proud to be Indian but its easier being light brown, Its really embarrassing to say that, isn't it?

N why do you feel embarrassed?

M because again its like I'm a big hypocrite, there I am going on about how proud I am to be Indian but then I'm saying I'm glad I have light skin so really I'm saying exactly the same things as the media does which I feel ashamed about and its these sorts of things that maintain racism through the values we ourselves attach to skin colours and things. If we aren't going to have pride in our brown skin colour, how can we expect white people to respect it, its like at my school, there have been instances of racism amongst the kids, not just whites against blacks but blacks against Asians and its all about skin colour where a black skin is seen to have more value in it then an Asian one and I think that comes from the whole Black Pride movement you know, we've never had anything like that, black people have been through terrible things in their history, like we have in fact worse than we have but there's always been a heightened political awareness around skin colour and appearance which is what I've read, you know things like Rastafarian style as political statements and we've never had anything like that related to appearance and yeah ok its happening abit now but its still not really coming from us is it (pause) its coming from white people wearing our clothes and our jewellery and our makeup styles and its on their terms, its not really in terms of our race giving value to ourselves and that's an important issue I think to do with how people see themselves and how they interact with others (long pause)

N I agree, its a good point, can you tell me more about it

M well I think there needs to be more positive things coming from our side, you know its very difficult to challenge what's normal and in the majority but now that we are seen and heard more than we used to be, we should be taking advantage of that and using it to attach more value to ourselves and change people's views but I don't think that's the way its going(pause)instead we've got programmes and films coming from us that repeat the same things that white people have been saying and thinking about us for years you know and all it does is keep us in a little box which is exactly what films like Bend it like Beckham are all about, why does it all have to revolve around Asian parents being both uneducated and strict, my parents aren't like that and have never been like that, they are both highly educated and have always encouraged me to do whatever I wanted which is how I ended up teaching art because that's what I've loved since I was a child, drawing and painting and they've encouraged me to pursue that interest which goes against all the common images you see of Asians as doctors or accountants, I'm not saying there's anything wrong with that but it keeps us in that box doesn't it, like we are all clones and doesn't allow us to be seen as creative as well so I think we should be able to expect things that are coming from our side to give different sides to us, as human beings, not just as culture people and I don't think its being thought of the right way either, things like Goodness Gracious Me which everyone thinks is so fantastic and clever I just can't see how because all it really does is make stereotypes even more normal through making them laughable and I really doubt if most people understand the ironic things they show, do you know what I mean and really children who are watching that are just going to see that well its ok to make fun of Indians because Indian people are doing it to themselves and again it devalues us (pause) that's

why in my classes I try to get the kids to think outside of the boxes by introducing them to art and fabrics from around the world, explaining about where they've come from, how they've been made and in what circumstances and encourage them to ask questions by exposing them to a wide range of material that they wouldn't necessarily expect to be associated with a particular country and I do think things like that make a difference because I know what it was like when I was at school and I had teachers who did that sort of thing, not many to be honest, there were alot of horrible ones who grouped all the blacks and Asians together and spoke down to them but the ones that did make attempts to do things differently were the ones whose classes all the children enjoyed and it encouraged people to ask questions, do you know what I mean..

N Oh yes, absolutely, I totally agree

M (interrupts) My husband's experiences are totally different, you see he went to a school that was in inner london, so there was a mixed character to the school and he had some Asian and black teachers so he's grown up with an emphasis on different things, you know, that things aren't all about what race you are or what culture you are *because* its different for him because growing up with other Asians and having cultural events at school was *normal to him and now* he works in a predominantly Asian firm whereas my experience was really different, so for me culture plays a big part in my life, but for him he can point to other things that he sees as divisive, like religion or money you know which is why he doesn't really understand my need for wanting to know all about my culture, going on these cultural forums and stuff and its difficult to explain it to him but its all about finding out about my roots and staying true to them (long pause) and that's why I think its so important that we have authentic places to see our culture and find out things so the Asian websites, Asian functions and just in general its good having the Asian networks, music channels and magazines which I used to be so addicted to, even now I do read them and its important we have them, something that reflects our lives as Indians living in Britain but I do wish they weren't so much copies of magazines like Vogue or Marie Claire, but just with Asian faces and a few Indian words sprinkled in, I mean yep ok in the Asian ones we get to see Asian faces and read about Asian celebrities which is really important but there's no point just having Asian substitutes of these magazines, you know what's the point, I'd rather read those then because I know that the Asian ones are just imitations, where's the originality but I guess its difficult in practice to be that original when there are so many magazines around, but its very annoying the way the format is almost identical, like when they have articles exposing practices like child marriages in India, which of course is really bad but I don't like the tone of these articles that is actually just like a white magazine would be, you know really judgemental as if just because we are British Asians we must distance ourselves from this and comment negatively without giving enough information about it. I'm not saying these sorts of things are right at all but being an Asian magazine, it could provide more information as to why and how these things came about, what role they had to play in society but the articles never have any of that, they just copy the tones of white magazines and then detach themselves from it which I don't like(pause)and again it leads to devaluing us or making it look like people in India are really

backward and cruel by taking instances that do happen, I'm not saying they don't but they get commented on without context which just sets us up for a fall and who knows, white people may read these magazines, even if one white person reads it then any stereotypes they may already have will just be confirmed(pause)I know it must be difficult to find some original way to do things and I'm not saying that we should just promote ourselves as being really great people who can do no wrong because that's just ridiculous but not in ways that put us further down because when you are a minority, you have to think like that otherwise we just wouldn't have any sense of value in ourselves and that's what I think Asian things can and should give us, which kind of brings me full circle really.

(after spending approx 2hrs with me, interview ends at this point as M has personal appointment)

Appendix 3

Semi Structured Interview: captions writer (3E/mainstream)

N Can you tell me something about the aims of the magazine?

CW Entertainment basically, all round entertainment featuring celebrities, fashion, beauty, interviews and I think that's about it really, oh and we have articles about topical issues, we've had more of an emphasis on that recently, that's about it really.

N You mentioned there's more of an emphasis on topical issues now, what's the reason for that do you think?

CW We've got quite a few new people in that want to widen our appeal really.

N How do you mean?

CW Well move us away from just the teenage and young single woman market to also the slightly older, maybe newly married, career woman who juggles lots of aspects, from trivia to the serious.

N Right, right so what sorts of topical issues are being featured?

CW Everything really from relationships to pregnancy to domestic violence, those sorts of things but really that's a small focus, its much more angled towards light entertainment and featuring fashion and beauty because that's where the main revenue comes from.

N Can you elaborate on that?

CW Well, as anyone in the field will tell you we depend on advertising revenue to function basically, which is why there are so many adverts in magazines for this product and that product, that's all there is to it.

N Ok, can you tell me abit about your specific role?

CW Basically, I formulate the words around a certain feature or photoshoot.

N Right and what are your main motivations

CW Well really, my primary concern when formulating text is simplicity and catchiness..the best way to achieve that is to look at the content and subject matter, then take the cleverest but easiest and most familiar association I can think of and that will appeal to the majority of readers...obviously, we don't want to offend anybody and would never do that deliberately but somewhere along the line it will happen but it can't be taken that seriously, after all we are in the field of entertainment not politics."

N How do you mean that you may offend?

CW Not offend so much but its difficult because we try and appeal to as many people as possible but within that, there's always going to be groups that get offended or are not favoured.

N ummm such as?

CW well like men for instance (laughs) they feature in our magazine but its through women's eyes so ultimately its women that are favoured but then look at men's magazines and the reverse is true so ultimately everyone is catering for their audience. So through that people somewhere along the line aren't going to be happy and really, I can't deliberate that much on that. I just keep it simple and in all honesty, it's pretty simple really, you have a story or a feature or a picture and you need something short, dynamic and instant, have that instant appeal, it's got to grab the reader straight away and they've got to know exactly what you're talking about through that one caption so it has to be on the button, it doesn't have to be anything very deep and meaningful, in fact the simpler the better, after all, it's just some words and pictures and bringing them together for the reader in as catchy way as possible and that's it.

N Ok, yes, I know we are running out of time so if I could just ask your opinion about the increasing attention given to Asian culture in the media and magazines for instance

CW Really its about supply and demand, if something becomes of the moment, it will be featured everywhere and be it Asian fashions or any kind of fashion it comes and goes in cycles and that's the field we are in which makes you so aware that anything and everything can be a fad, its got nothing to do with any particular culture in a meaningful sense. The paramount thing is what will be popular and what will people want to buy.
